

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2016

HEARINGS
BEFORE A
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND
RELATED AGENCIES

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PART 7

	Page
U.S. Forest Service Budget Oversight Hearing	1
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Budget Oversight Hearing	77
National Park Service Budget Oversight Hearing	159
Bureau of Land Management Budget Oversight Hearing	207

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INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2016

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2015.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WITNESSES

**TOM TIDWELL, CHIEF, U.S. FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**

**TONY DIXON, DIRECTOR-BUDGET, U.S. FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPART-
MENT OF AGRICULTURE**

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN CALVERT

Mr. CALVERT. The committee will come to order.

Chief Tidwell, Mr. Dixon, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing on the fiscal year 2016 budget request for the U.S. Forest Service.

Overall, the President requests a total of \$4.9 billion in discretionary funding for the Forest Service in fiscal year 2016. This is \$100 million less than the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. A total of \$794 million is requested for wildland fire management. This represents more than 47 percent of the entire Forest Service budget. In addition, a budget cap adjustment of \$854 million is requested.

The subcommittee continues to be concerned about the cost of fighting wildfire and the effects of it on the Forest Service budgets, programs, and management. We were fortunate that the 2014 fire season was below normal, with just 87 percent of the 10-year average of wildfires. There were more than 63,000 wildfires reported, with about 3.6 million acres burned. This is just 53 percent of the 10-year average.

As we look at the 2015 season, we have reason to be concerned. Since January 1st, there has been more than 5,700 fires that have burned more than 91,000 acres of land. In comparison, about 68,000 acres burned over the same period last year. The 10-year average is 138,000 acres burned. These figures, combined with the fact that California continues to suffer through an exceptional drought, parts of the country, including Minnesota, have the potential for above-normal wildfire activity in the next few months are worrisome. We may be headed toward a fire-funding shortfall again.

I want to thank you, Chief Tidwell, for the administration's efforts to change the way we budget for wildfires.

I also would like to express my appreciation for Congressman Simpson's efforts to educate our colleagues and keep the pressure on Congress to address the issue. Eight members of this subcommittee are co-sponsors of his bill. We continue to work on this.

As I have mentioned in the subcommittee's previous hearings, we are operating in a very constrained funding environment. We are bound by the spending caps under existing law. Of course, we will do our best to address the highest priority needs, but any increases most likely will have to be offset against other accounts and programs in this bill.

Let me mention a few of the increases and decreases that the subcommittee will be closely reviewing and discussing today. The major increases include \$5 million for trails, \$8 million for the Forest Legacy Program, \$16 million for land acquisition, \$20 million for collaborative forest landscape restoration, and \$30 million for deferred maintenance.

Some notable reductions include \$4 million for research and development; \$4 million for international forestry—and I know Ms. McCollum—this is an important issue for her—\$4 million for Urban and Community Forestry; \$6 million for grazing management, which will be offset by a new fee; and \$14 million for roads.

The budget request also proposes again to consolidate a number of accounts into the Integrated Resource Restoration Account and the Land Management Planning Assessment and Monitoring Account. I look forward to hearing about how the IRR project has worked.

Chief, I want to thank you for your work on behalf of the American people and the Nation's forests. We also thank you for the assistance your staff provides to the subcommittee. They are a wonderful, helpful resource to us.

Now I yield to the gentlelady from Minnesota, Ms. McCollum, for any opening remarks she would like to make.

OPENING REMARKS OF MS. MCCOLLUM

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Chief Tidwell, Mr. Dixon, it is good to see you again.

With 193 million acres of national forest system lands and a rich history in forestry management, the Forest Service has established itself as one of the national and international leaders in natural resource conservation and recreation management. To carry out these important responsibilities, the Forest Service has requested \$4.982 billion, which is actually \$130 million less than what was appropriated in 2015.

As I look over the 2016 budget request, I see a lot of familiarity with the 2015 request. And, frankly, this presents this subcommittee with a rather mixed bag. While there are proposed budget increases to address certain pressing needs, there are also proposed cuts to other programs of interest to members on this subcommittee.

I support the efforts to reform the way we fund wildfire costs, as many members on this subcommittee do, and I am proud I am one of the people who is a co-sponsor of Representative Simpson's bill. We have seen wildland fire costs rise from 13 percent of the Forest Service budget in the 1990s to 50 percent of the budget today.

Given the unpredictable nature of fire, we need a more predictable way of funding fires that does not continually threaten our other important Forest Service programs.

I also appreciate the land acquisition funding requests this year, especially projects in the Chippewa and Superior National Forests. These projects are important to providing hunting and other recreational opportunities and to preserve important fish and wildlife habitat in my State and others.

I am concerned, however, about proposed cuts to such areas as forest, rangeland research, international forests, and urban and community forests. Mr. Chair, we could have written our speech together. What signal is the Forest Service sending us when year after year we see proposed cuts in these important aspects of Forest Service operations?

We need to do more, not less, on such programs as invasive species and to stop illegal logging that threatens the United States markets. I, for one, want to see the Forest Service have the fiscal resources it needs to carry out all aspects of its mission and not just certain parts.

I have noted in our previous hearings that the fiscal year 2016 budget requests for programs and agencies under the Interior and Environmental Subcommittees have not been extravagant. This is specially true for the Forest Service. When adjusted for inflation, the year 2016 request is well below the appropriated Forest Service level a decade ago in 2005.

Chief Tidwell, the Forest Service has its work cut out to meet its restoration goals and maintain its leadership on forest management in a period of limited financial resources. So I look forward to your testimony and how the agency is going to meet these challenges. And I thank you for being here today.

Mr. Chair, thank you for the courtesy of an opening statement.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank you.

And, with that, Chief Tidwell, you are welcome to begin your statement.

OPENING REMARKS OF CHIEF TIDWELL

Mr. TIDWELL. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member McCollum, Congressman Stewart, Congressman Kilmer, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here today to present the President's request for our 2016 budget for the Forest Service.

FY 2016 FOREST SERVICE BUDGET PROPOSAL

I appreciate your remarks. You captured some of the key points I want to stress today and, also, captured the concerns. We understand the budget constraints that we are having to deal with. So this budget request does reflect some very difficult decisions that we have to make in our budget request. There are some key items, key elements, of this request that I just wanted to address.

First of all, it does allow us to continue increasing the pace and scale of restoring the Nation's forests and grasslands. We will be able to treat another 2.9 million acres with this budget, restore over 3,200 miles of stream, restore 2,000 miles of road, improve the

ecological function on over 20 watersheds, and produce one of our key outputs of board feet, 3.2 billion board feet.

This budget request asks for an expansion to be able to add additional Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects. These projects—we now have 23 spread across the country—have proven that, when we make a commitment for a multi-year level of funding to large landscapes and work under a collaborative effort, we can make a significant difference over time. It provides a certainty for industry to be able to invest because they understand this is a multi-year commitment. We would like to be able to expand this program with this budget request.

I also want to build on the success of this idea into areas in the country that we are not dealing with a fire-dependent ecosystem. In some places, like in Minnesota, there may be some areas, even though we do have active fire in there from time to time.

But if you look at the CFLR projects spread across the country, there are parts of the country where we do not have fire-dependent ecosystems where we also need to be able to demonstrate a long-term commitment to be able to address forest health. So it is one of the things that, under this budget request, I would like to be able to pursue about five or six pilot projects across the country.

This budget request also allows us to continue our work in hazardous fields, and we will be able to treat another 1.7 million acres in the wildland-urban interface. We have list after list of where we have made the difference, when we have been able to thin out our forests, reduce the hazardous fields, before we have a wildfire. Not only does it make it safer for our firefighters, it allows us to increase our suppression effectiveness and it reduces the overall severity of the fire.

This budget request will also allow us to continue to suppress 98 percent of the fires where we take initial attack, to have the resources, the aviation resources, the firefighters, and the engines, to be able to continue to have that level of success when we are working with our partners. It also requests a different way to fund fire suppression.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member McCollum, thank you for your support and for all of the committee folks that are co-sponsors on this bill. I appreciate the work that went into it last year. But it is just essential that we find a way to solve this.

The proposal basically continues to have—70 percent of the cost of dealing with fire suppression would continue to be in our budget, and then 30 percent would come out of the Disaster Relief Fund. Now, that 70 percent allows us to cover the costs of 99 percent of our fires. So we are talking about 1 percent of our fires that we feel should be considered a natural disaster and to be able to have the costs of dealing with those fires come out of the Disaster Relief Fund.

Last year the 10 largest fires cost \$329 million. That was like 29.4 percent of our total cost last year. That was just 10 fires out of over 5,000 fires that we had last year. So this request will once and for all allow us to stop this disruptive practice of having to shut down operations in August, start pulling back funds, telling people to stop working, to be able to be positioned to transfer money to cover the cost of fighting fires.

So I appreciate your support on this. We want to continue to do everything we can to help you to build additional support so we hopefully can get this passed this year.

A couple other things in this budget request. It does ask for increases in our Land and Water Conservation Fund and our Forest Legacy funding. It has been my experience that, with our land acquisition, not only does it allow us to be able to improve the overall conditions of the landscape, it allows us to guarantee that there will be public access into the future in these areas. It reduces our costs for management. The Forest Legacy work also allows us to be able to keep private lands in a working condition versus having those lands go into some form of development.

We also want to increase our efforts to restore some of our key recreation facilities and trails with this request for some additional deferred maintenance funding. We are also going to continue our work to be able to expand wood markets through the Secretary's Green Building Initiative, through our continued work with biomass utilization, and also to increase funding for our Forest Inventory and Analysis. This is the data that all of us use, whether it is the Federal agencies, the States, or industry. It is the essential information that allows us to be able to track the changes in our forest resources in this country.

We also include a framework in this budget to re-authorize Secure Rural Schools. This is a program that has proven to be very successful for over the last 14 years, and it is something that, once again, we have included in our budget request. We stand ready to work with the committee to be able to find a solution to re-authorize this key authority.

These are some of the key items I wanted to share with you. Once again, thank you for your time. And I look forward to your questions.

[The statement of Mr. Tidwell follows:]

Statement of
Tom Tidwell, Chief of the USDA Forest Service
Before the
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Concerning
President's Fiscal Year 2016 Proposed Budget for the USDA Forest Service
March 3, 2015

Mister Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on the President's Budget request for the Forest Service for fiscal year (FY) 2016. I appreciate the support this committee has shown for the Forest Service in the past. I look forward to continuing to work with members of the Committee to ensure that stewardship of our Nation's forests and grasslands serve the desires, expectations, and interests of the American people. I am confident that this budget, paired with the passage of a wildland fire suppression budget cap adjustment, will allow the Forest Service to meet the increasingly complex challenges of natural resource management while fostering efficiency and demonstrating cost-effective spending.

Budget Request and Focus Areas

The President's proposed overall budget for discretionary funding for the Forest Service in FY 2016 is \$4.9 billion. That is \$130 million less than the FY 2015 enacted level, but it reflects strategic investments to increase forest restoration and reduce wildfire threats to communities. This Budget focuses on five key areas: restoring resilient landscapes, building thriving communities, managing wildland fires, promoting safety, and building diversity and inclusiveness. It proposes a fiscally responsible funding strategy for wildland fire management, contributes to long-term economic growth, and continues our efforts to achieve the greatest benefits for the taxpayer with the most cost-effective approach. This budget will enable us to more effectively reduce fire risk, manage landscapes more holistically, and increase the resiliency of the Nation's forests and grasslands as well as the communities that border them.

Restoring Resilient Landscapes

The Forest Service responds to the many stressors affecting our landscapes and watersheds by working to restore healthy, resilient forests and grasslands. By restoration, we mean re-establishing the functions and processes characteristic of healthier, more threat-resistant, and more resilient ecosystems, even if they are not exactly the same ecosystems that existed before. These efforts reduce carbon emissions and make forests and grasslands more resilient in the face of climate change as well as climate-related disturbances, such as wildfires and insect outbreaks. Our goal is to protect and regain the ability of America's forests and grasslands to deliver all the social, economic, and ecological values and benefits that Americans want and need, both now and for generations to come.

In FY 2012, Congress authorized a pilot program where multiple budget line items were combined into a single line item, Integrated Resource Restoration, in three Forest Service regions. Combining funds from multiple budget line items allows us to better integrate and align watershed protection and restoration into all aspects of our management. Results from the pilot program consistently show that budget planning is simpler and managers have more flexibility to complete restoration work. When programs are better integrated, it is easier to establish goals and set priorities. Given the demonstrated success of this approach in the three pilot regions, we

propose to fully implement Integrated Resource Restoration across the entire Forest Service in FY 2016, with a budget of \$822 million. This level of funding and the associated outputs below are dependent on the passage of a fire suppression cap adjustment and will help us implement restoration projects to address insect and disease outbreaks in areas designated under the 2014 Farm Bill and to work with the States under our new Good Neighbor Authority. If funded at the requested budget level, we will use the Integrated Resource Restoration line item to treat 2.9 million acres to improve watershed function and resilience, sell 3.2 billion board feet of timber, maintain over 52 percent of the watersheds across the National Forest System at a properly functioning condition, and improve the condition of up to an additional 20 watersheds.

Created in 2009, the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program encourages collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration of priority landscapes. The program currently supports 23 large-scale projects for 10-year funding to implement priority restoration projects on National Forest System lands while engaging local communities and leveraging partner resources through collaboration, implementation, and monitoring. The projects support an array of restoration activities, including reducing hazardous fuels, restoring watershed function and resilience, increasing pollinator habitat, and improving forest vegetation and wildlife habitat. These collaborative projects help local economies by creating and maintaining jobs in rural communities, generating commercial timber and biomass for energy production, and restoring forest health while reducing the need for fire suppression in overgrown forests. The FY 2016 President's Budget for the Forest Service includes a proposal to eventually increase funding authority for the program from \$40 million to \$80 million, with funding in FY 2016 requested at \$60 million. The funding increase will allow us to pursue up to ten additional projects. Accordingly, the budget proposes extending authority for the program through 2024 to allow for full completion of new projects.

The FY 2016 President's Budget for the Forest Service sets the stage for restorative actions, providing the necessary infrastructure as well as the needed scientific and organizational foundations for ecological restoration. Our researchers will provide managers with the knowledge they need to make sound risk-based decisions to take restorative actions, partly through the Regional Hubs for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change. The FY 2016 President's Budget funds Forest Service Research and Development at \$292 million. That includes \$83 million for Forest Inventory and Analysis, an increase of \$13 million from the FY 2015 enacted level. This additional funding will allow us to inventory the vast, remote forests of interior Alaska for the first time using state-of-the-art remote sensing technology combined with field teams to verify our initial results.

It will also allow us to address five of the 11 provisions in the Forest Inventory and Analysis strategic plan, developed pursuant to direction in the 2014 Farm Bill. These provisions include improved forest carbon and biomass estimation, enhanced forest ownership study, improvements in land use and land cover research, annualized forest products monitoring, and inventorying the full base target of 15 percent of plots in the East and 10 percent of plots in the West annually.

Building Thriving Communities

The Forest Service works to build thriving communities across the Nation by providing communities with the many economic benefits that result from sustainable multiple-use management of the national forests and grasslands, helping urban communities reconnect with the outdoors, and expanding the benefits that both rural and urban residents get from outdoor

recreation. Rural communities rely on the landscapes around them for hunting, fishing, and various amenities.

Forest-dependent rural counties and communities have long benefited from Forest Service payments to support rural schools, including payments under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. We propose reauthorizing the act through 2019. This will help timber-dependent rural communities transition to a more diverse, resilient economic model that is less reliant on the receipt of Federal financial support.

Jobs and economic benefits stem from our administration of the National Forest System, including its multiple uses, as well as from investments in the activities, access, and infrastructure needed to deliver essential public services such as clean water, electrical power, and outdoor recreational experiences. The FY 2016 President's Budget for the Forest Service will focus on building thriving communities by providing jobs and benefits in two key areas: outdoor recreation and forest products. We will also continue to issue and renew grazing permits, execute timber sales, and permit other commercial uses of forests and grasslands nationwide.

Jobs and Benefits from Outdoor Recreation

Spending by visitors engaging in recreation activities, including skiing, hiking, hunting, and fishing, supports more jobs and economic output than any other activities on the National Forest System. In 2012, outdoor recreation on the National Forest System supported around 190,000 jobs and contributed about \$13 billion to the Nation's gross domestic product.

We offer a range of recreational opportunities across the National Forest System to connect people with nature in an unmatched variety of settings and through a plethora of activities. We will expand programs that demonstrate success and explore new partnerships that will leverage resources to help get more kids outdoors, up close and personal with nature. We will also reconnect visitors with America's outdoor heritage and help them learn about the Great Outdoors, improving their quality of life as they become citizen-stewards of their public lands. The FY 2016 President's Budget would fund the Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness program at \$263.9 million. Reauthorization of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act through FY 2017 would help us meet public demand for sustainably managed recreational facilities.

We manage our infrastructure to ensure safety, protect water quality, and conserve wildlife habitat, especially threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. The FY 2016 President's Budget includes a \$33 million investment in Deferred Maintenance and Infrastructure Improvement to address the backlog of maintenance and repair of Forest Service facilities.

Jobs and Benefits from Timber, Grazing, and Other Uses

Through work on National Forest System lands, the timber and forest products industries, livestock producers, and minerals/energy production collectively support about 118,000 jobs. Each year, these industries contribute about \$11.5 billion to America's gross domestic product. In rural areas in particular, these uses deliver sustained social and economic benefits to communities.

Our restoration work will create local jobs and help sustain communities, as will the sale of restoration byproducts. We will use traditional timber sales as well as our stewardship contracting authority to restore watersheds and healthy, resilient forested landscapes on National

Forest System lands while engaging communities in management of their public lands. Our FY 2016 target for timber volume sold is 3.2 billion board feet, up from 2.9 billion board feet in FY 2015. We will promote woody biomass utilization and biomass markets and facilities, providing jobs and other community benefits. Local communities will also benefit from fuelwood, special forest products, and safe drinking water supplies from the national forests.

However, the national forests account for only 20 percent of the Nation's forested lands. The remainder is under State, private, Tribal, municipal, or other Federal ownership. Private forests alone supply almost 30 percent of the Nation's surface drinking water, provide habitat for 60 percent of at-risk species, and furnish more than 90 percent of domestically produced timber. Accordingly, our responsibilities to support sustainable forest management go far beyond the National Forest System lands.

We will continue to support sustainable forest management on a landscape scale through a variety of educational and technical assistance programs for private forest landowners. Rural communities benefit from nearby forests, which provide local jobs, bolster rural economies and community infrastructure, and furnish opportunities for rural Americans to connect with the Great Outdoors. The FY 2016 President's Budget proposes maintaining our investment in forest landowner assistance through \$23 million in funding for the Forest Stewardship program.

Land Acquisition and Improved Public Access

We join the U.S. Department of the Interior in requesting \$400 million in discretionary funding and \$500 million in mandatory funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund in FY 2016, with all \$900 million coming from mandatory funding in FY 2017. Full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund supports the President's agenda of improving public access. Accordingly, we will work with partners to protect critical forested landscapes from conversion to developed uses through \$61 million in discretionary funding for the Forest Legacy Program, \$8 million more than the FY 2015 enacted level.

Our Land Acquisition Program will provide access for people, protect critical ecosystems, and prevent habitat fragmentation. Land acquisitions provide proven value for the taxpayer, making it easier and less expensive for people to access their public lands—and easier and less expensive for the Forest Service to manage and restore the lands entrusted to our care. An analysis by The Trust for Public Land showed that every \$1 invested in Federal land acquisition returns \$4 to the taxpayer. The FY 2016 President's Budget proposes \$63 million in discretionary funding for our Federal Land Acquisition program, an increase of \$15.5 million from the FY 2015 enacted level. Five million dollars of the discretionary funds will be used to acquire tracts to improve sportsman and recreational access to National Forest System lands.

In and around our cities, we will work with partners to sustain and restore urban forests. This not only helps ensure widespread access to green space, but provides other vital benefits such as energy savings, flood and pollution control, and climate change mitigation. The vast majority of Americans live in urban areas and urban and community forests cover about 130 million acres, an area larger than California. Tree-lined streets and open spaces improve quality of life for millions of Americans and we will work with urban communities to protect and expand these amenities. The FY 2016 President's Budget funds Urban and Community Forestry at \$23.7 million.

Managing Wildland Fires

Increasingly severe fire seasons are one of the greatest challenges facing the Nation's forests. The Forest Service will continue to collaborate with its Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments, partners, and stakeholders on the implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy to safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed, use fire where allowable, manage our natural resources and, as a Nation, live with wildland fire.

The Forest Service has one of the most effective fire organizations in the world and continues to keep almost 98 percent of the wildfires we fight very small. However, the few fires that do escape initial response tend to grow much larger far more quickly than ever before. In addition, the cost of fire suppression has soared in the past 20 years.

We are again proposing a revised funding strategy for wildfire suppression. The FY 2016 President's Budget proposes discretionary funding for suppression at a level represented by 70 percent of the 10-year average of fire suppression costs. This level of funding provides for suppression of 99 percent of the fires we fight¹. In addition, up to \$855 million would be made available under a disaster funding cap adjustment to meet funding needs for fire suppression above the base appropriation. This strategy would provide increased certainty in addressing growing needs for fire suppression funding while better protecting non-suppression programs from funding transfers that diminish their effectiveness. Moreover, it would allow us to stabilize our investments in restoring forested landscapes, helping forests adapt to the growing effects of climate change, and preparing communities in the wildland/urban interface for future wildfires.

Restoring Fire-Adapted Ecosystems

Fire plays a beneficial role in maintaining the ecological stability of many landscapes, and the Forest Service is working with partners to restore healthy, resilient, fire-adapted ecosystems. Our goal, especially near homes and communities, is to prepare forests and grasslands to resist stresses such as drought and recover from disturbances, including wildfires. Our large-scale restoration projects are designed in part to restore fire-adapted forest types across large landscapes, including the reintroduction of periodic wildland fire where safe and effective.

Developing new markets for the low-value woody materials we remove during restoration and hazardous fuels treatments will help offset the costs of these activities while providing new revenue streams for private landowners. Therefore, this remains a top priority for the Forest Service. We will continue to provide grants and other forms of assistance for wood-to-energy initiatives, and to help projects compete for other sources of funding. We will also provide technical assistance to help facilities that convert wood to energy become or remain financially viable.

Building Fire-Adapted Human Communities

More than 46 million homes in the United States, or about 40 percent of our Nation's housing units, are located in fire-prone parts of the wildland/urban interface. We will continue providing scientific and analytical support to help these communities become fire-adapted. This work includes completing hazardous fuels treatments, preparing community wildfire protection plans, becoming designated as Firewise Communities through the national Firewise program, and

¹ A joint analysis between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior found that one percent of fires are responsible for 30 percent of suppression costs.

obtaining equipment to respond to and mitigate wildfire. Our goal is to encourage communities to adapt to wildland fire by establishing an effective emergency response plan and managing risk in a way that protects lives, property, and wildland resources. The FY 2016 President's Budget proposes funding the corresponding Research and Development program at nearly \$20 million and the Joint Fire Science Program at nearly \$7 million, both about equal to the FY 2015 enacted levels.

We will control fuels in the wildland/urban interface by removing buildups of dead vegetation and thinning overly dense forests. We will focus on treating high-priority areas, including municipal watersheds to protect water supplies. The FY 2016 President's Budget proposes \$359 million for our Hazardous Fuels program, approximately the same as the FY 2015 enacted level.

Responding Appropriately to Wildfire

Where suppression is needed to protect homes and property, we will continue to deploy resources at appropriate places and times. Fire managers are using improved decision support tools to make risk-based assessments about when and where to suppress a fire—and when and where to use fire to achieve management goals for long-term ecosystem health and resilience. Our primary goal is always to protect life and property. Our collaborative interagency emergency response capacity, executed in cooperation with law enforcement, helps us accomplish this by focusing on preparedness for wildfire and other natural disasters and assuring an appropriate risk-based response.

We will continue to maintain an appropriate level of preparedness. Our Preparedness program has proven its worth. Fire Program Analysis, a strategic management tool, shows that every \$1.00 subtracted from preparedness funding adds \$1.70 to suppression costs because of small fires that escape to become large fires. Maintaining an adequate level of preparedness will reduce overall fire management costs. The FY 2016 President's Budget proposes \$1.08 billion in Preparedness funding.

We will continue pursuing our Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy. Airtankers play a crucial role in keeping fires small. In FY 2016, the Forest Service expects to have up to 21 airtankers available. Fifteen will be next generation and six will be legacy. One of the 16 will be a Forest Service C-130H. Our strategy is to fund both the older aircraft still in operation (needed as we transition to newer aircraft) and the next-generation airtankers currently under contract.

We will also continue leveraging State and local firefighting resources by providing State and volunteer fire assistance. State and local fire departments are the first responders to almost 75 percent of the Nation's wildfires, so investing in their capacity is a high priority for the Forest Service. Federal grants are matched dollar for dollar, extending the value of our investments. We propose funding the State Fire Assistance Program at \$78 million and the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program at \$13 million, both nearly equal to the FY 2015 enacted levels.

Promoting Safety

Forest Service work can take us into high-risk environments. Ensuring human safety entails recognizing and managing these risks. For several years now, the Forest Service has been on a learning journey to become a safer organization. Our efforts have resulted in a reduction of work-related annual fatalities from a 5-year running average of 7.4 per year in 2009 to a current rate of 1.8 per year. We have also seen a 28-percent drop in new workers' compensation claims

(from nearly 3,700 annual claims to 2,700 annual claims) over the same period. Our goal is to become a zero-fatality organization by continuing to make safety an integral part of our organizational culture.

Building Diversity and Inclusiveness

At a time when the vast majority of Americans live in metropolitan areas, part of the Forest Service's job is to reach out to urban and underserved communities to give more people opportunities to get outdoors, participate in public land management, and engage in conservation work in their own communities. Building on USDA priorities, we will create and retain a more diverse workforce that reflects American society. Diversity of thought is key to allowing successful organizations to respond to changing circumstances, and it stems from hiring people from varied backgrounds. We will strive to become an employer of choice for all Americans by continuing to treat everyone fairly and respectfully and giving everyone in our workforce the opportunity to contribute and succeed.

We will expand access to the outdoors for underserved and minority communities and young people from urban areas by continuing to invest in programs designed to reach out to urban youth. We will also build on our work with partners to offer opportunities for youth in urban areas to engage in conservation work in their own communities and on National Forest System lands. We will continue to support the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative, with its target of 10,000 students serving on public lands. Forest Service Job Corps sites established eight Public Lands Corps projects, enabling 1,825 Job Corps students to participate in 21st Century Conservation Service Corps projects.

Cost Savings and Avoidance

The Forest Service is committed to achieving the greatest benefits for the taxpayer at the lowest cost. Mindful of the need for savings, we have taken steps to cut operating costs. Taking advantage of new technologies, the Forest Service has streamlined and centralized our financial, information technology, and human resources operations to gain efficiencies and reduce costs. We will maintain the \$100 million reduction in overhead costs (cost pools) implemented in FY 2013-2014.

In 2012, we adopted a new planning rule designed to reduce the length of time it takes to revise management plans, thereby reducing costs. We are also reducing costs by making our environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act more cost-effective.

We have adopted new public-private partnership strategies for leveraging restoration funding. For example, over 10 years the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program is expected to generate \$152 million in partner funding. In 2010, we also signed an agreement to use municipal funds to restore fire-damaged national forest land in the municipal watershed of Denver, Colorado. Over 5 years, Denver Water is matching the Forest Service's own \$16.5 million investment in watershed restoration. We have signed similar agreements with other cities.

Future Outlook

For more than a century, the Forest Service has served the American people by ensuring that their forests and grasslands deliver a full range of values and benefits. Americans benefit tremendously from investments in Forest Service programs and activities.

We are now facing some of the greatest ecological challenges in our history. Invasive species, climate change effects, regional drought and watershed degradation, fuel buildups and severe wildfires, habitat fragmentation and loss of open space, and devastating outbreaks of insects and disease all threaten the ability of America's forests and grasslands to continue delivering the ecosystem services Americans want and need. In response, the Forest Service is increasing the pace and scale of ecological restoration. We are working to create healthy, resilient forest and grassland ecosystems capable of sustaining and delivering clean air and water, habitat for wildlife, opportunities for outdoor recreation, and many other benefits.

Our budget request focuses on our highest priorities: restoring resilient landscapes; building thriving communities; and managing wildland fire safely and effectively, all while continuing to cultivate a highly diverse and inclusive workforce. We will continue to integrate our programs and activities while advancing on our journey toward becoming a safer organization that is more diverse and inclusive. We will also continue to reduce our environmental footprint and improve our administrative operations for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

This concludes my testimony, Mister Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the Committee members have for me.

Tom Tidwell
Chief, USDA Forest Service



Tom Tidwell has spent 38 years in the Forest Service. He has served in a variety of positions at all levels of the agency, including as district ranger, forest supervisor, and legislative affairs specialist in the Washington Office. As deputy regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region, Tom facilitated collaborative approaches to wildland fire management, roadless area management, and other issues. As regional forester for the Northern Region, Tom strongly supported community-based collaboration in the region, finding solutions based on mutual goals and thereby reducing the number of appeals and lawsuits.

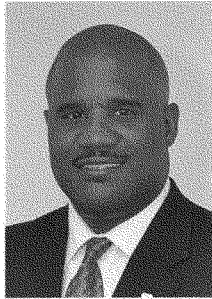
In 2009, after being named Chief, Tom set about implementing the Secretary's vision for America's forests. Under his leadership, the Forest Service is restoring healthy, resilient forest and grassland ecosystems—ecosystems that can sustain all the benefits that Americans get from their wildlands, including plentiful supplies of clean water, abundant habitat for wildlife and fish, renewable supplies of wood and energy, and more.

Such benefits are at risk from the effects of climate change, and Tom has led the way in forging a national response. Under Tom's leadership, the Forest Service has charted a national roadmap for addressing climate change through adaptation and mitigation. The Forest Service is taking steps to help ecosystems adapt to the effects of a changing climate while also taking action to mitigate climate change, partly by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Tom has facilitated an all-lands approach to addressing the challenges facing America's forests and grasslands, including the overarching challenge of climate change. Such challenges cross borders and boundaries; no single entity can meet them alone. Under Tom's leadership, the Forest Service is working with states, Tribes, private landowners, and other partners for landscape-scale conservation—to restore ecosystems on a landscape scale.

Tom is married to Kim, and they have one daughter, MacKenzie.

Antoine “Tony” Dixon
Director of Strategic Planning, Budget and Accountability (Budget)
USDA Forest Service



Tony Dixon, a native of Atlanta, Georgia, is currently the Director for the Strategic Planning, Budget, and Accountability office for the USDA Forest Service, a position he has held since July 2013. In this capacity, he is responsible for management and oversight of the execution, formulation, and presentation of the agency's budget, developing and integrating implementation of the agency strategic plan, and all performance and accountability measures and agency strategic goals.

Tony is a 24-year employee of the US Forest Service and launched his career as a cooperative education student on the Routt National Forest in Steamboat Springs, CO. He has served in a variety of positions and geographical locations, including the National Director of the Forest Service Job Corps Program, Deputy Regional Forester of the Rocky Mountain Region, and Forest Supervisor of the National Forests in Mississippi. He also served as the Deputy Regional Director of Public Affairs in the Atlanta-based Southern Regional Office and held a number of positions in the National Headquarters in Washington, DC, including Program Analyst, Legislative Affairs Specialist, Deputy Area Budget Coordinator, and Chief of Staff for the Deputy Chief of the National Forest System.

Tony has a bachelor's degree in marketing and forestry from Alabama A&M University and a master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University. Tony is married to Dr. Angela Cole Dixon, and has one adult son, Christopher.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Chief. And thank you for beginning to explain the wildland fire management and the budget cap proposal.

As you know, your budget, once again, proposes to establish a new budget framework for the wildland fire management program. A total of \$794 million in discretionary funds is requested for fire suppression. An additional \$854 million is requested for fire suppression through a budget cap adjustment.

As you made aware in your opening statement, eight members of this subcommittee are co-sponsors of Congressman Simpson's cap adjustment bill. I believe it will not be long before every member of this subcommittee signs on to it. We need to get this done. I remain hopeful we can get this legislation passed this year.

Given the drought situation in California and, really, throughout the west, several of our national forests in my region are already preparing for the worst.

For the sake of the new subcommittee members and the audience, can you explain the proposal and how the budget cap adjustment works.

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, once again, 70 percent of the 10-year average is reflected in our budget request today, and that will cover the costs of dealing with 99 percent of the wildland fires that the Forest Service deals with.

Once those funds are exhausted or if we get a large, catastrophic fire early in the year, then we can access the Disaster Relief Funds that are available each year to be able to cover the costs for these large catastrophic fires or, if we run out of funds late in the fire season, then any fire cost could then be paid for out of the Disaster Relief Fund.

The concept here is to be looking at these large, catastrophic fires—and, like I mentioned, just 10 last year—10 out of 5,000 equaled 30 percent of our costs—really should be considered a natural disaster, not unlike the way that we address the hurricanes, tornadoes, major flooding in this country. That is basically how it would work.

And we would continue our focus on risk management to ensure that we are making the right decisions, the best decisions, to be able to suppress fires and to maintain, you know, our cost-effectiveness when it comes to suppression. We have a great track record. I think it was 2 years ago we showed that, because of our approach with risk management, we avoided costs around \$377 million of suppression costs.

So I think it is important for everyone to understand that, even with this different approach, we are going to continue to have the rigor to be able to manage our suppression efforts so that we will continue to be cost-effective in our approach. But 8 out of the last 10, 8 out of the 10, last years we have exceeded the 10-year average.

FIRE TRANSFER: SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. CALVERT. Of the years that we have exceeded your budget request, is it true we have always done a supplemental to pay back those accounts?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. Sometimes it is a year later. But yes.

Mr. CALVERT. The reason I bring that up is that we are going to pay for this one way or the other. But the problem is how do you manage your department if you do not know what your biggest cost number is.

Imagine running a business—When I was in the restaurant business, if I could not estimate what my costs were going to be I would not have a successful restaurant.

In your case, your largest cost item is wildfire, and you can't guess what that is going to be. And so that is one of the reasons why this bill is important, that you can be able to better manage your department and be able to budget accordingly.

WILDLAND FIRE SUPPRESSION CAP PROPOSAL

One of the questions that I know that Mr. Simpson wanted me to ask and then I will turn it over to Betty is: Will the proposal amend the Stafford Act? And maybe how does the Stafford Act relate to the Budget Control Act and the Disaster Relief Fund?

Mr. TIDWELL. It does not amend the Stafford Act. It just allows us to access the funding that is provided for every year to deal with disasters in this country. It is our understanding that we have never used all of the funds that are available.

I think it is important that folks understand this would not have any impact on FEMA's ability to be able to carry out their responsibilities and to be able to request funding to come out of the Disaster Relief Fund. So it will not have any impact on FEMA operations.

The Congressional Budget Office, last Congress they scored this as neutral, which makes your point, Mr. Chairman, that we pay the cost of fire suppression. The difference is just to be able to have the funds available so that we do not stop work, often preventive work, late in the year and then have Congress just to appropriate the funds a few months later.

Mr. CALVERT. I would hope that you are visiting with the House Budget Committee chairman, Tom Price, and the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, Mike Enzi, to press the case for this because we are going to need their assistance.

Ms. McCollum, you are recognized.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am going to submit for the record a question on the Forest Service and mining. There are mining projects going all across the United States, and I want to understand that you have the tools that you need to help with, restoration, resiliency, and protection.

INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY

But I want to ask about the International Forestry Program in particular because it helps with sustainable forest development overseas. It is one of our biggest soft power assets—very, very important in the Middle East, as well as in Africa and other parts of the world. But, most importantly, it helps combat illegal logging and so it protects the United States' forests from invasive species. We have a direct economic benefit here at home with the work that they do.

Now, last year the budget request eliminated the funding entirely. Congress wisely rejected that and put \$8 million in. The Forest Service now is seeking to cut that in half, to \$4 million.

So what happens under a 50 percent cut to the Forest Service efforts to stop illegal logging, to stop invasive species from impacting the forests? Do we tell the insects at the port only 50 percent of you come in because we have cut our budget? More importantly, what kind of message are we sending our international partners with the 50 percent cut?

Mr. TIDWELL. Congresswoman, you laid out all the benefits of the International Programs, and I appreciate that.

There is no question this reduction would result in a change in our permanent staffing. These are the people that we are able to attract to these jobs that not only have the forestry, the conservation, skills, but they also have the language skills. They also are the folks who are able to develop relationships with their counterparts around the world so that we have the effective delivery of these programs to prevent illegal logging, to be able to prevent impacts to migratory species that make all the difference in this country and, also, to be able to promote sustainable forestry, sustainable conservation, across the country.

This is another example of the consequences we are dealing with a constrained budget. In this budget request, even though we are only asking for 70 percent of the 10-year average, the 10-year average has gone up \$115 million between fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2016. So even 70 percent of that is, what, \$80-some million that we have to put into our budget.

So until we get this fixed some way to be able to recognize the cost of dealing with fire suppression, we are going to be faced with making these very, very difficult situations. They are very hard trade-offs, but these are the things that we just have to deal with.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Tidwell, do you know the complement of staff that you have in the International Forestry Division?

Mr. TIDWELL. I think we have around 65 folks that work in that staff group. The staff is funded not only out of the appropriations, but, because of the expertise that we have, we do a lot of work with USAID funding. But, there is no question that this budget request will have an impact on our ability to be able to retain permanent staff.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Would you go from 65 maybe down to 60 people? Maybe fewer?

Mr. TIDWELL. It would probably be something like that.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Pretty hard to do the job with that amount.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. That is why we need a secure border, to stop these illegal insects from coming into the United States.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I am with you. That is why we are going to pass it today. Right?

Mr. CALVERT. That is right.

Mr. Stewart, you are recognized.

CHIEF TIDWELL'S CAREER

Mr. STEWART. I was going to say something really sarcastic, and I am glad I didn't.

Chief, we are glad you are here. I know of your career. We appreciate your many years of service. The only fault I can see in your bio is that you haven't served in the beautiful forests in Utah, that I can see, although in that region.

Mr. TIDWELL. Actually, I have. I was the Forest Supervisor on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest and, also, a district ranger on the Uinta National Forest.

Mr. STEWART. Well, see, that is what I thought, but I did not see it in here. And so that is kind of why I wanted to mention it. I had been remembering incorrectly. So thank you.

FOREST PLAN REVISION: GRAZING PLANNING IN UTAH

So, then, I am going to ask a local question, if I could, which many times these hearings kind of gravitate towards local issues. Because I think it is important for us to have this opportunity to ask for our constituents back in the State and the district.

And I know—or at least I suppose you are familiar. There is this three-forest initiative that dealt with actually the Manti-La Sal, Dixie, and, also, Fishlake. And you were trying to put together a new forest plan, but it emphasized primarily grazing. And that has great concerns with members among the delegation, but also with those who would be most impacted, such as small ranchers who rely upon those grazing opportunities.

We have been told by Kathleen Clarke, who I think you know, and others that you have pulled back on those plans. Is that true? Is that something that we are not going to go forward with right now?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. The Regional Forester took a look at that situation and things that have kind of progressed and decided that it is actually better to stop with this current assessment and to look at grazing along with all the other multiple use when we revise the forest plans for those forests.

Mr. STEWART. And thank you for doing that. And I couldn't agree with you more, that this should be something of a broad, overall plan, not something that is pulled out specifically.

And I think you can understand, Chief, why that would be such a great concern for ranchers in that area, because they felt like they were being targeted and without much opportunity to influence that. So thank you. Thank you for that.

RESTORATION: HEALTHY, RESILIENT FORESTS

The other thing is, as I read through your biography again, which I am familiar with, I am reading here that, under your leadership, the Forest Service is restoring healthy, resilient forest and grassland ecosystems that can sustain all the benefits Americans can get from their wildlands, including renewable supplies of wood and energy. And I appreciate that.

I think one of the key words there is "renew" because we did not have healthy forests for a number of years. I do not know if you would agree with that. And I am not saying all forests. But I think an initiative to make them more healthy than they have been is greatly appreciated by many of us.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS: INCREASING TIMBER REVENUE

I would ask kind of a broad question, and it ties with something in your testimony. And that is SRS. You know, we are well into the fiscal year. We do not know how that is going to be funded. That probably frustrates you as well as it does many of us. We have been told by leadership the House will move something the first quarter, but I do not know the answer to that.

And, Chairman, maybe you do. And if you do, we would look to hear it.

But it seems to me a better answer, other than SRS and relying on the Government to fund these schools—and I have a high school, for example, in my district that will absolutely shut down if they do not get that funding. I think a better answer is, you know, let's maybe increase the availability of logging that is taking place or used to take place there for many generations. It is no longer happening like it was. So they are dependent on this SRS.

Could you respond to that. And I would be interested in your thoughts.

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, Congressman, the Secure Rural Schools provides a safety net to the counties. Today, especially with the markets that we have, even though the markets have started to recover from the recession. The base rates that we charge for timber across the country are still close to what they were in the late 1970s. So that has had a significant impact in different parts of the country.

The other part of it is that, to be able to provide the level of funding that the Secure Rural Schools authority has, I mean, we would have to increase the harvest to around 16 billion board feet, which is not sustainable. It is not realistic, even though today the fees that we collect through our recreation operations actually exceed the fees that are generated for timber harvest. So it is more of a mix.

There is no question we want to increase our forest restoration. There is a need to increase timber harvest. We have been very clear for the last few years about the need to address the fact that—somewhere between 65 to 83 million acres of our national forests need some level of restoration. And about 12 to 15 million of that is going to require some form of a timber sale because we just can't put fire into those areas.

So we want to be able to increase that activity, increase the jobs. There is a need to provide a safety net for counties to be able to deal with, when we hit recessions and see drastic reductions in the market and the price of this material.

And so I feel that is why I want to work with the committee any way we can to be able to re-authorize this. We have included it in the President's budget request every year that I have been in this job to be able to continue this.

I actually worked on the very first legislation of this and understand the importance of this. So I understand the need to be able to increase the amount of work we are doing. But, at the same time, we need this safety net for our counties.

Mr. STEWART. And I understand that. And, believe me, I am not suggesting that we could replace SRS with logging royalties completely. Because I agree with you. That is probably not likely.

But, in conclusion, I guess—I am guessing my time is up—but everything that we have talked about here are all so interrelated. A healthy forest drives everything else. A healthy forest drives timber, and that helps with SRS. It helps us with fire suppression, obviously. And it helps us with grazing, all of these issues.

And I will maybe just conclude with this thought. When I was in the Air Force, I flew helicopters at a station in Spokane. We would fly all through this area, doing rescues and picking people up.

And although I did not realize it at the time, I remember flying over forests and looking and seeing beautiful green forests and then there was a boundary and then it became this dark, kind of dead, forest where there was so much more dead timber. And I did not know why. But, at the time, it was that one was a State forest and the other was a Federal forest.

As I started out saying, we did not manage our forests very well for a number of years. I think we are doing a better job at it. At least that is my impression. I think it is important to thank you for being willing to help in that. And let's continue to move forward on that.

Thank you, sir.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS: SRS, LWCF, AND PILT

Mr. CALVERT. Just a quick issue that the gentleman brought up on Secure Rural Schools. That is kind of associated with Land and Water Conservation Fund and PILT. And we all need to work with Mr. Bishop to get authorizing language on all of these issues and a funding source before we can work together to help resolve these issues that are very important in the west especially.

Mr. STEWART. Well, let's go to his office right after this hearing, then.

Mr. CALVERT. Okay. Mr. Kilmer.

Mr. KILMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to Mr. Stewart for raising the issue around Secure Rural Schools. It is a big deal for a lot of our districts.

RESTORATION: COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

I have two areas I want to talk about. One is sustainable harvest. I think the Forest Service has been focused on supporting restoration particularly in dry and fire-prone areas. And I certainly get that prioritization, given the threat of wildfires.

But I am concerned that we have not dedicated adequate resources to maintaining sustainable harvest in all of our national forests. The Olympic National Forest is in my district, is a wet forest, supports multiple uses, including timber harvest. It also has a need for management to promote resiliency and diversity in the forest.

So I want to get a sense from you what actions are the Forest Service taking to ensure that all of our forests, including those that aren't necessarily fire-prone, are being supported by sustainable harvest levels?

And then, on top of that, we have worked in our neck of the woods to stand up a timber collaborative where folks on the ground

are working together to increase timber harvest, but funding continues to remain a very significant impediment to seeing progress.

So how can the agency, whether being more efficient or using the dollars it has more effectively, allocate resources so that we are actually rewarding those efforts where we have got folks on the ground trying to look at how we can manage our forests in a responsible way?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, Congressman, the first key is what you mentioned, these collaborative efforts, to be able to bring people together with diverse interests to be able to really understand what needs to be done on the landscape. Whether it is a dry, fire-prone forest or a wetter forest, there are still forest health issues that need to be addressed. That is the thing that we are striving for.

So even there on the Olympic National Forest, there are needs for us to be able to do active forest management, to provide for diverse habitats and not just late-seral habitats.

The solution here is through these collaborative efforts where we have—we have had tremendous success across the country where, in the past, we were at loggerheads, could not get anything through. There was always a high level of concern about any active management. We are moving past that.

But there are places, like in your part of the country, where we can actually—if we need more old growth, we can get in there and be able to do thinnings in some of the plantations and actually accelerate old growth and be able to remove quite a bit of biomass, but, at the same time, be able to promote that.

It is really to look at the landscape, what needs to be done on that landscape. The key is to bring people together so that they understand that this is work that is going to benefit not only, local industry, but it is going to benefit wildlife. It is going to benefit the watershed. It benefits all the ecological services that come off of these landscapes.

Mr. KILMER. So I agree with the value of the collaboratives. And I would certainly like to work with you to see how do we actually reward those communities that are doing that hard work of identifying ways to sustainably manage and to increase harvest levels.

WOOD INNOVATION TECHNOLOGY

The other thing I wanted to ask about was wood in commercial buildings. We have seen that engineered wood products can have a lot of potential for creating a new market for building materials. They can turn low-value wood products into strong and durable products and even support commercial high-rise buildings. They are strong, and they are fire-resistant. They conserve energy. So a lot of wins there.

But it seems to me that the U.S. is behind in this. There are innovations happening all over the place: U.K., Canada, elsewhere. But we seem to be lagging, particularly when it comes to tall wood buildings.

How do we get past that? How do we foster some opportunity in the U.S. so that same kind of innovation that we are seeing in other countries is happening here in the United States?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, we need to be able to demonstrate that wood is a good building material besides for single-family homes and

small commercial buildings. We are thinking up to eight to ten stories.

So Secretary Vilsack initiated a competition to be able to put, basically, funding available for folks to be able to compete, to design a multi-story building so that we would then be able to move forward and get it constructed. We think this is the best way to be able to demonstrate that this is another green building material.

As you mentioned, there are many countries in Europe that already build above four stories. Canada is also interested in this. But the United States—we are somewhat held with our building codes to this four stories.

Especially with the engineered wood products like these cross-laminated timbers that our Forest Products Lab has developed, we can show without any question that we can build eight, ten stories with wood. It has the strength. It passes all the tests as far as being heat- and fire-resistant.

So that is the key element, I think, to being able to demonstrate this. This will show the engineers, it will show the architects, that, hey, here is another way to build multi-story buildings.

Mr. KILMER. Thank you. I appreciate that. And, again, that is another thing I would love to be able to work with you and the rest of the team on.

I have got other questions. But out of deference to the rest of the committee, I will yield. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Mr. Cole.

Mr. COLE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chief, every time I raise questions about forests I get skeptical looks around here, like, "Are there trees in Oklahoma?" But there really are. And we really do have forests. I know I am going to have to bring back visual proof at some point.

But I actually have a series of questions. And they relate to a very specific institution in my district, and so you might not be able to answer these. And they are not gotcha questions. It may be best to submit them for the record. But I want to go through it, if I may.

TREASURE LAKE JOB CORPS CENTER

Again, much to the surprise of, I think, probably a number of people on this committee, Forest Service operates a number of Job Corps centers, essentially as a contractor working for the Department of Labor. And I am sure you are aware DOL is in the process of closing Treasure Lake Job Corps Center, which is run by the Forest Service and actually located in Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in my district.

And it strikes me as unusual because it is the only Job Corps center any place in America out of the 165 that are being closed. So I will have a series of questions for my friends at the Department of Labor.

But has the Department of Labor been open and transparent with the Forest Service during the closure process?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes, they have. We have worked very closely with the Department of Labor on this. And with reduced budgets for the Job Corps centers, we had to work together to identify which ones

should be considered for closing. And so, through the negotiations, we got down to, closing the one that happened to have the lowest level of performance.

We have worked there at that Job Corps center to try and improve performance. But there is always going to be one that is going to be the lowest. When you look at having to make a tough decision about closing a center, it just kind of comes out to be the math, that this one has the lowest score.

Mr. COLE. Again, please do not misunderstand me. I am not skeptical, and I know these are tough decisions for all of you to make. But I just want to take a long, hard look when there is only one.

Second question: Did the Department of Labor provide the employees at Treasure Lake with adequate notice and due process as part of the closing?

Mr. TIDWELL. Those are Forest Service employees. And so we have worked to be able to notify our employees and try to find another opportunity for them, and, hopefully, most of our employees will be able to move to another Job Corps center.

We have enough vacancies in the system to take care of them. However, there will be some that for a variety of reasons cannot move, and we expect that those folks will need to leave our employment.

Mr. COLE. Now that the students have actually been transferred up from the site, as I understand it, how many employees remain? And I assume you are responsible for the salaries or is Department of Labor? I mean, how does that work?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, we are working that out. The Department of Labor funding for the Job Corps program—as long as the center is open and has students, then their appropriations cover that. As soon as the students are gone, then it is a question.

We are trying to get it closed down just as quickly as we can and have a few employees there to take care of just the maintenance of the facility.

We are working very closely with the Department of Labor so that we can move our employees to another center as quickly as we can and just avoid this problem.

Mr. COLE. With the facility being closed down, what are the costs, if any? Do you raze the site? Do you task the site for other purposes? What are the opportunities of using it? Or do we literally restore the land to its original condition?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, I will have to get back to you on that one. This site is actually under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Service. So when we move our employees off of it, we need to hand it back to them. We will have to get back to you on that next step.

Mr. COLE [presiding]. I would appreciate that.

And if there are, you know, any considerations for use for another capacity—there is obviously a military post in the immediate vicinity. There is a large veteran population. It just would be a shame to lose the facility itself, again, if there is any other appropriate use for it. So I would appreciate a response back.

With that, let me turn next to my good friend from Maine, Ms. Pingree.

Ms. PINGREE. Thank you very much.

FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

Thank you for your work and your department's work on behalf of our forests. I guess, unlike Oklahoma, Maine is a State where we are very attached to our forests. Eighty-six percent of the State is forested land. I think that might be the highest percentage of any State in the country. And we have different issues, obviously, than many of the States out west.

But I want to talk to you a little bit about the Forest Legacy Program. I see there is \$61 million of funding in there. So thank you to the chair and ranking member and everyone who has supported this in the past.

For us in Maine, we are beneficiaries of, about 700,000 acres of protected land through that program and some others that haven't even been accounted for. So that is really important to us and the ability to have these private-public partnerships and work with some of the conservation partners who care deeply about keeping our forestland in Maine.

In particular, with being the most forested area on the east coast and having so many population centers having access to Maine, it is critically important for the natural habitats it protects. Obviously, our forests have been a big part of the Maine economy over time, and we are very anxious to make sure this program continues.

So I wanted to let you talk a little bit about it. I am glad to see, as I said, that there is \$61 million in the President's budget to fund it, that there are 30 States on the list for their worthy programs, including Maine. And I want to hear you talk a little bit about the role it plays and how you see its critical nature into the future.

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, thank you.

It has been a very successful program. And part of it is that each State submits their recommendations for their projects, and these all come from willing landowners that have tremendous local support.

Through this effort, we are able to acquire a conservation easement that allows the landowners to stay on the land. It allows them to be able to continue to practice forestry versus having to sell out probably to some other form of development where we would lose all the benefits from that forested ecosystem. So that is really the key benefit.

There are families that get in situations through inheritance or whatever that, if they do not have another out, they are forced to sell. You are fortunate in Maine that you haven't seen all the level of development that has occurred in other parts of the country. But, all indications, it is headed that way.

So this is just another excellent program to be able to keep these working landscapes working, keep forested landscapes working. Then the public receives all the benefits, areas to go hunting and go fishing, and the clean water that comes off of well-managed forests. So the public gets a lot of extra benefits out of this that sometimes we take for granted.

Ms. PINGREE. Yes, and I want to concur. You are right. Maine has a lot of concerns about the potential for development. And I

think this downturn in the economy actually slowed a little bit of that down.

But as we see the economy improving and, again, our proximity to population centers, it makes that land very vulnerable to that. We really appreciate having this opportunity.

I know, when you see aerial photos of flying over the east coast of the country, it is one of the few black, dark areas that are actually left. And that is critically important for so many reasons.

So thank you. And I yield back.

Mr. COLE. Thank you.

I will now recognize the gentleman from New York, Mr. Israel.

Mr. ISRAEL. Thank you very much. I know we are up against some votes; so, I will be very brief.

URBAN FIELD STATIONS AND URBAN FORESTS

Chief, Mr. Cole talks about no trees in Oklahoma. People assume there are no forests on Long Island, that it is all Starbucks and malls.

But, actually, in Fort Totten, in Queens, we have an Urban Field Station, which is a research facility that is a wonderful partnership between the Forest Service, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and, recently, the National Areas Conservancy.

Can you speak to the importance of those kinds of Urban Field Stations, and do you have the resources necessary to continue those partnerships?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, Congressman, I have had the pleasure of actually going up there and meeting with our scientists and, also, with the folks from New York City Parks to be able to firsthand see the difference that we are making by having our scientists be able to work in large city like that, but to be able to look at the benefits of urban forests in this country.

Actually, I think New York City has something like over 20,000 acres of forests just in that city. Around the country, we have way over 100 million acres of urban forests. So that provides us kind of a lab to be able to understand: What do we need to do to be able to not only maintain urban forests, but to be able to justify and quantify the benefits, and not just the hard economics of it, but also the intrinsic values of having green spots, forested areas, especially in our cities.

We have the data that shows it produces not only clean air, it reduces the amount of infrastructure. We need to deal with storm water. There is no question it increases the value of homes. We have studies now that show that it actually increases retail opportunities. People like to shop on tree-lined streets.

But the real benefit is to be able to understand how to be able to do it in large communities like that. So that is why it is essential that our research station is there, and that these folks get to work in that environment, especially with such a great partnership we have with the city.

Mr. ISRAEL. Thank you. And I hope you will come back to Fort Totten. I would love to visit with you.

Mr. TIDWELL. Thank you.

Mr. COLE. If we can, we are going to take a brief recess until the chairman returns. And, that way, Mr. Israel and I can both get down and—here he is.

HAZARDOUS FUELS MANAGEMENT

Mr. CALVERT [presiding]. I wouldn't let you down.

Okay. Last week in my home area, since we had some home questions here, a risk assessment and modeling firm from Irvine, California, released a report, estimating that nearly 900,000 homes in the west are at high or very high risk of being damaged or destroyed by wildfires.

California tops the list with more than 50,000 homes that are in a very high-risk category. Overall, the estimates are it would cost more than \$237 billion to rebuild these homes.

Reports like this can help the Forest Service and other Federal and State agencies to focus on specific areas where mitigation resources should be spent. They can also help individual homeowners and communities take action.

The question is: Have you had an opportunity to review that report?

Mr. TIDWELL. I have not had the opportunity to see that report. I am not surprised with the information you are sharing. It tracks with what we know and what we continue to see.

It also provides support for our budget request, to be able to continue the level of hazardous fuels funding that we have had in the past, to be able to address those conditions.

We lose on average, 3,000 homes a year, to wildland fire. So when we talk about these being natural disasters—3,000 homes—we can make a difference. And we have plenty of examples, some in your State, where, by doing the treatments ahead of time, we can save those homes.

We still have large fires. The King fire was an example in your State last summer, a large fire. But because of the work that we did ahead of time to reduce the fuels, we significantly reduced the threat to the communities.

Mr. CALVERT. Well, I can tell you through my own experience that your fuel reduction program around Lake Arrowhead, Big Bear, up in the San Bernardino National Forest, had an effect of not having a potential fire. And the same thing applies up around the Idyllwild area, that we had these fuel reduction programs.

So they do work and they certainly reduce risk and it certainly informs the communities that they need to work with you to do that.

Does the Forest Service work with private-sector assessment companies or the insurance industry to identify and mitigate risk?

Mr. TIDWELL. We work with everyone to look at how to really mitigate the risk. Our key partners are the States. Ideally, we want to be able to not only do the treatments on the national forests, but, at the same time, to be doing the treatment on the adjacent private ground.

And we find that is the best solution. So we work very closely through the States using some of the hazardous fuels funding that we provide and, also, the grants we provide to the States, to be able to look at how we can really make a difference across the

landscape and not just on the national forests or just on private land.

So we work with insurance companies, anyone that provides the information that we need to be able to really focus where we need to put these treatments.

AVIATION ASSETS

Mr. CALVERT. Moving over to the aviation assets—and, obviously, there is many parts to your aviation program. The National Defense Authorization Act transferred seven C-130s and 15 C-23s, the little Sherpas—I used to see those in Iraq quite a bit from the Coast Guard and the Forest Service—and provided \$130 million for planes to be retrofitted.

The fiscal year 2015 omnibus provided \$65 million for you to acquire next-generation air tankers. The budget request for fiscal year 2016 includes funding to support all firefighting aircraft, including the contracts and management costs, for up to 21 air tankers. This includes legacy, next-generation, and one-agency-owned C-130 aircraft.

What is the status of your aircraft fleet?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, we will have 6 of the legacy large air tankers available this year, and we will have up to 14 of the next-generation contract aircraft.

We also hope to have one of the C-130Hs that is available later this year that we will put a MASS unit into that to be able to start to use that aircraft, even though we will not see probably any more of the C-130Hs except for maybe another one in 2016, but in 2017 is when we will expect to have those come onboard.

We also have the arrangements we have had in the past to bring aircraft down from Canada and Alaska. Plus, we also have the MASS units from the Air Force and Air Force Reserve. So we will have adequate large air tankers again this year, and we will be moving forward, as we acquire the C-130Hs, to have that part of our base.

We are moving forward to do a business case analysis on what is the best approach to use the \$65 million that was provided last year to acquire another aircraft.

Mr. CALVERT. The C-23s, have they been transferred yet? Are they in use?

Mr. TIDWELL. They have been transferred. We will be going through those to make some minor modifications on those and be able to start to move forward with those. That will be our smokejumper aircraft across the board.

We feel, by using the same aircraft at all of our smokejumper bases, that it is not only more efficient, it is a more safe platform to be able to use versus a variety of aircraft that we have.

So we will be moving forward with—beginning to put those into place—probably a couple of them—maybe this year. But then next year we will be using them.

Mr. CALVERT. How many people can you put in them?

Mr. TIDWELL. There is room for eight in those planes. You might be able to get ten in there.

Mr. CALVERT. Yeah. Pretty tight.

How are you managing these aircraft? Is there an office that you have dedicated to manage that? How do you manage that?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, as far as the maintenance for those planes, we are going to use a contract to be able to cover the maintenance on those planes. We will have our staff to ensure that they meet all of the safety inspections, et cetera. We will be using a contract to be able to maintain those and probably fly them, too.

Mr. CALVERT. Ms. McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY

I understand that Mr. Israel and you started talking about urban and community forests. So I just want to go back and touch on that again.

You had made a comment that there is a new study saying that tree-lined urban streets increase retail shopping. Being a former person in retail and retail management in the private sector that can be a really good thing.

But I also know that, when there is green space in urban areas, it reflects in calmness for communities. There is less bad activity in them. Home values stabilize. There is a lot of economic benefit.

So when the Forest Service is proposing a 15 percent cut, a \$4.3 million cut, to the Urban and Community Forestry Program—you can see why some of us become a little alarmed.

LANDSCAPE SCALE RESTORATION PROPOSALS

Last year you said that there would be no reduction in Urban and Community Forestry. You stated that you believed that these programs would be taken care of as part of a proposed increase to the Landscape Scale Restoration.

So why would we be taking money from the Urban and Community Forestry Program and putting it in another program? Why not just fund the Urban and Community Forestry Program where there is clear accountability, there is great transparency, and there is no question about where the biggest populations of our country are, that are youth who still having a chance to be engaged in forests? 83 percent of the population is living in urban areas.

But when you start cutting pests and invasive species, just as you are forced to do in this budget there are pages and pages of lists of the little pests. Right? There are proposed budget cuts in there. So gypsy moth and emerald ash borer are something that a lot of our urban areas are very, very concerned about or have had to go in and do reforestation.

So why does the Forest Service keep putting this cut forward when you pretty much know, with the days of earmarks being gone, it is the only way many of us in urban areas can make sure that we have urban forestry and community forestry programs moving forward.

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, the concept with the Landscape Scale Restoration Program was to take, you know, funds from a variety of our State and Private Forestry programs and put it into one restoration account that would allow States to be able to propose projects that go beyond just one concept.

Because you could have an urban situation, also a forest health situation, where, by having a larger pot of funds, it allows them to accomplish multiple objectives with just one fund.

It does increase the competition, which we feel actually brings more effectiveness to our program. It also lines up very well with the States' action plans that each State has completed and are implementing.

This concept tracks with our Integrated Resources Restoration, but on a much smaller scale, to provide a set of funds for the States, give them a little more flexibility about what is the best way to accomplish the work that needs to be done on a broader landscape and, at the same time, to be able to maintain the majority of our urban community funding programs.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. So the National Council of State Legislators might think this is a great idea. But does the League of Cities think this is a great idea?

Mr. TIDWELL. I do not know.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Because I go down to my lowest denominator. I work for the people in the cities. Having been both a State legislator and a city council member, I can tell you how hard it is for small and suburban communities to be going in and competing for some of these grants at a State level.

So, I am going to contact the League of Cities and the mayors and see if they feel confident that the States are going to really make sure in this competition, one, that urban and community areas are going to be able to compete and, two, that they think even in the State system that they are going to be able to compete.

It might be a very noble idea to have all of these grants out here, but these grants cost communities and cities a lot of money to start competing with larger groups and larger counties that maybe have a forest industry. They may have great noble project to be done, but all of a sudden that is what they are up against competing, and then they do not have the economic focus in there.

While what you pointed out is great, it is not tangible. It is anecdotal, and it is something that we are not allowed to do dynamic scoring on.

So I am very concerned. To move away from this with the best of intentions—and I truly believe it is with the best of intentions—could have some harm to it that would prove itself irreversible in future years as budgets continue to get tighter. So I am not a real fan.

Mr. TIDWELL. Okay.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. But I think you figured that out, so—Mr. Chair.

FIRE FIGHTING TECHNOLOGY PCADS

Mr. CALVERT. We discussed this just prior to the hearing starting. I have a friend, a Member, that is very interested in PCADS technology. So I better ask the question because he will ask me.

It seems on the face of it the technology that would be more cost-effective would benefit the Forest Service. We understand that there are technical problems that need to be worked out.

You responded that your staff reviewed PCADS in 2011. You had concerns about its accuracy, its safety, the personnel on the

ground. However, you offered to take another look. And so I guess I have to question it.

Did you conduct another review on PCADS?

Mr. TIDWELL. You know, I am not aware that we have conducted another review, but we are always open to new technology. It is my understanding that, my past concerns still exist. And so it is—whether with PCADS or other ideas that are out there, I mean, we are always interested in that.

But, at the same time, the proponents are going to have to be able to show that their ideas are something that would not only be effective as far as retarding fire, but, at the same time address our safety concerns.

Mr. CALVERT. Right. As you know, if we can use existing inventory of aircrafts as small as our smallest aircraft and as large as a C-17 in terms of larger fires, if the technology existed to do that, that certainly could provide you more operational flexibility in case of fire. So that is the intent behind this.

And so I hear that they are making progress on that technology. So it would not hurt, maybe, to take another look at it.

Mr. TIDWELL. Okay. Thank you.

ILLEGAL MARIJUANA CULTIVATION ON NATIONAL FOREST

Mr. CALVERT. The other issue, getting away from fire for a second, is some farming activity that is taking place in the national forest which has nothing to do with normal farm activity, as you can probably guess.

I have been getting reports about the growth of illegal marijuana cultivation in public lands and how it affects the environment and employee public safety, tourism. Maybe it helps tourism. I do not know. But it certainly has an effect on law enforcement. There has apparently been a report.

Have you been able to review any of these reports about some of this illegal activity taking place in the Forest Service?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, I get briefed on that activity.

Mr. CALVERT. I guess we asked for a report, also.

Mr. TIDWELL. I will get back on the status of the latest report. But there is no question this is an ongoing problem. We see it pop up almost anywhere across the country, depending on the year.

It is something that—you mentioned all the impacts. It not only affects the safety of the public—because sometimes we have to actually close areas of the forest where we have this activity until we can get in there and get it cleaned out—it also impacts the environment as far as with water quality. Also, in your State, it has had a significant impact on some sensitive species, such as fisher.

When UC Davis saw the fatalities in fisher, they were able to trace it back, to the pesticides that the folks working these marijuana grows were spreading around to deal with rodents and stuff and, actually, it was killing the fishers.

So a species that we go to great lengths to be able to provide habitat for sometimes we have to change our management to be able to provide fisher habitat and then we are finding out here that probably having the biggest impact is from this marijuana-growing activity.

Mr. CALVERT. When you are doing your planning, do you bring law enforcement in to talk to you about how you are planning and how you are operating some of these national forests?

Mr. TIDWELL. Yes. I mean, our law enforcement folks are spread across the country and provide that insight and working, of course, with the other Federal agencies and, also, with county law enforcement to be able to address these issues. Our intent is to eradicate this activity whenever we find out that it is going on.

Mr. CALVERT. As you know, there is violence because people are protecting these grows and people can unsuspectingly just walk in on it and get themselves in a fix. We have had that happen in California on a number of occasions. It is a serious issue. And it is certainly something that we need to look into.

Okay. Any additional questions?

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Well, Mr. Chair, I was going to ask a question for the record. But the fact that I have time, I want to just ask it now. And if you need to, please get back to me.

MINING PROPOSALS: ADMINISTRATION

The budget request notes that the Forest Service is estimating in fiscal year 2015 that your agency will be administering at least 8,000 new and ongoing mineral operations to ensure compliance with operating plants and environmental standards for the protection of surface resources.

There are a number of controversial mining proposals on or adjacent to national forest lands, including Rosemont Copper Mine in the Coronado National Forest in Arizona; Resolution Copper Mine in the Tonto National Forest in Arizona; PolyMet Mine in the Superior National Forest in Minnesota. So they are all over.

These are new things that are coming up that you have to react to. In fact, in Minnesota's Superior National Forest, where the mine leases are being managed through BLM adjacent to Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness that the Forest Service manages, that is the most visited wilderness in the country. If the copper-nickel mining is allowed in the Superior National Forest, the potential for water pollution is very real and it would be devastating to the Boundary Waters Canoe area.

So is the mining and potential related water pollution in the Boundary Waters Canoes Area a concern to the Forest Service? Do you really have the tools in your budget in the Forest Service available to mitigate, to eliminate, or to look into these negative impacts on our national forest lands and waters? I mean, your budget has not gone up, but these requests are going up.

Mr. TIDWELL. Yeah. Congresswoman, these are just the ongoing, issues that we deal with across the board with all of the activities that occur on the national forests. The demand for more activity, more things from the public, continues to go up.

When it comes to minerals, we have to set our priorities. We continue to work very closely with the Bureau of Land Management. They have the responsibility for the subsurface. We deal with the surface.

So we are responsible to analyze what are going to be the impacts to surface disturbance and how to mitigate those. Especially

when it comes to water and groundwater, they are usually some of the key issues when it comes to any of these large mines.

We do a lot of this work across the country. We always have. So we just have to set priorities. Sometimes we are not able to be as responsive to the proponents as much as they would like but it is just a matter of setting priorities.

We do have concerns about water quality, whether it is in Arizona or whether it is in Minnesota. They are concerned with the boundary waters. I was able to visit that part of your State last year, and without any question, it just seems like everyone in Minnesota—they either have a cabin up there or they would like to have a cabin up there.

But it is a key part of that State. It is something the State is very proud of, and it is essential that we take the necessary steps to protect the water quality of that area as much as we can of every area in the United States.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Well, one of the things in that watershed basin—and I know there is different topography in different parts of the United States—is we are a very water-rich State up in that part. And water moves around. It is above the ground. It is under the ground. Streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, all filtering through and around.

So one of the things I think we need to be very cognizant of is not just that area immediately adjacent to wilderness lands, but as other areas look to do mining development in that water basin, the accumulation effect of what is going to happen.

One of the things I conveyed to the EPA Administrator about this is that we can't start lowering standards because of the accumulated effects of this. I look forward to working with you to understand better how we are making sure that, for the next generations, we are protecting these fragile waters.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. And if you have too much water there in Minnesota, you can always send some out to California.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Sir, I respect you a lot, but we are keeping our water. We have to share it with Canada.

Mr. CALVERT. There you go.

Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chief, good to see you. Welcome.

Mr. Chairman, I know that we have run a little late with votes. I would be happy to submit my questions for the record and try to keep us on time.

Chief, I look forward to working with you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you very much.

Are there any additional questions?

Ms. MCCOLLUM. No, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. CALVERT. I am sure there will be some additional questions for the record. We will keep the record open for a few days for that.

And, with that, thank you. We appreciate both of you coming today.

We are adjourned.

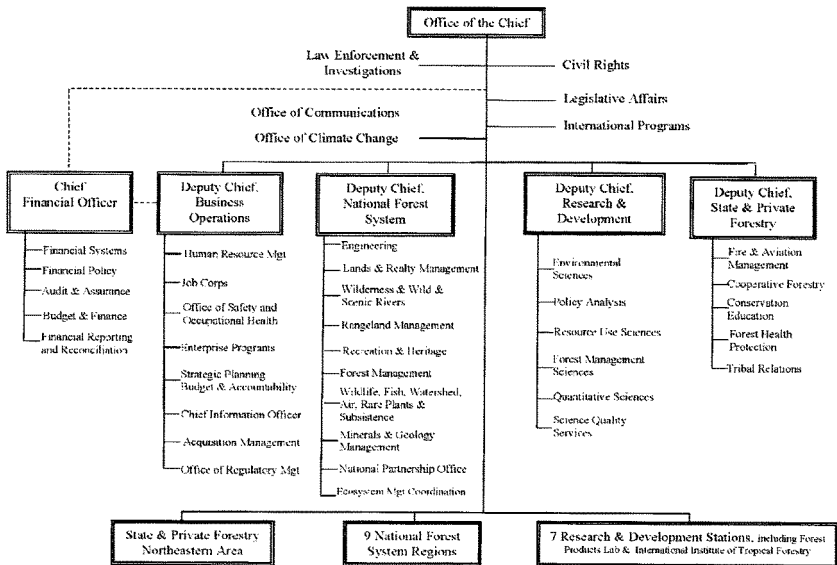
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Budget Hearing: U.S. Forest Service
March 3, 2015

Questions for the Record – Chief of the Forest Service

Questions from Mr. Calvert

Calvert Q1: Please provide a current organizational chart of the U.S. Forest Service including region, forest and district offices.

Answer:



A list of the 9 National Forest System Regions (and their associated forests and ranger district offices) and the 7 Research & Development Stations may be found on the following pages.

Region 1 – Northern Region

Regional Headquarters – Missoula, MT

Beaverhead – Deerlodge National Forest

- Butte Ranger District
- Dillon Ranger District
- Jefferson Ranger District
- Madison Ranger District
- Pintler Ranger District
- Wise River Ranger District
- Wisdom Ranger District

Bitterroot National Forest

- Darby Ranger District
- Stevensville Ranger District
- Sula Ranger District
- West Fork Ranger District

Custer – Gallatin National Forest

- Beartooth Ranger District
- Sioux Ranger District
- Ashland Ranger District
- Yellowstone Ranger District
- Bozeman Ranger District
- Gardiner Ranger District
- Hebgen Lake Ranger District

Dakota Prairie Grasslands

- Grande River Ranger District (Grand River and Cedar River National Grasslands)
- Medora Ranger District (Little Missouri National Grassland)
- McKenzie Ranger District (Little Missouri National Grassland)
- Sheyenne Ranger District (Sheyenne National Grasslands)

Flathead National Forest

- Hungry Horse, Glacier View Ranger District
- Spotted Bear Ranger District
- Swan Lake Ranger District
- Tally Lake Ranger District

Helena National Forest

- Helena Ranger District
- Lincoln Ranger District
- Townsend Ranger District

Region 1 – Northern Region (Continued)

Idaho Panhandle National Forest

- Bonners Ferry Ranger District
- Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District
- Priest Lake Ranger District
- Sandpoint Ranger District
- St. Joe Ranger District

Kootenai National Forest

- Cabinet Ranger District – Trout Creek Ranger Station
- Fortine Ranger District – Murphy Lake Ranger Station
- Libby Ranger District – Canoe Gulch Ranger Station
- Rexford Ranger District – Eureka Ranger Station
- Three Rivers Ranger District – Troy Ranger Station

Lewis and Clark National Forest

- Belt Creek Ranger District
- Judith Ranger District
- Musselshell Ranger District
- Rocky Mountain Ranger District
- White Sulphur Springs Ranger District

Lolo National Forest

- Missoula Ranger District
- Ninemile Ranger District
- Plains / Thompson Falls Ranger District
- Seeley Lake Ranger District
- Superior Ranger District

Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest

- Moose Creek Ranger District
- Red River Ranger District
- Salmon River Ranger District
- Lochsa Ranger District
- Powell Ranger District
- North Fork Ranger District
- Palouse Ranger District

Region 2 – Rocky Mountain Region

Regional Headquarters – Golden, CO

Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, and Pawnee National Grasslands

- Boulder Ranger District
- Canyon Lakes Ranger District
- Clear Creek Ranger District
- Pawnee National Grassland
- Sulphur Ranger District

Bighorn National Forest

- Medicine Wheel / Paintrock Ranger District
- Powder River Ranger District
- Tongue Ranger District

Black Hills National Forests

- Bearlodge Ranger District
- Hell Canyon Ranger District
- Mystic Ranger District
- Northern Hills Ranger District

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests

- Grand Valley Ranger District
- Gunnison Ranger District
- Norwood Ranger District
- Ouray Ranger District
- Paonia Ranger District

Medicine Bow – Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grasslands

- Brush Creek / Hayden Ranger District
- Douglas Ranger District
- Hahns Peak / Bears Ears Ranger District
- Laramie Ranger District
- Parks Ranger District
- Yampa Ranger District

Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands

- Bessey Ranger District and Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest
- Fall River Ranger District
- Fort Pierre Ranger District
- Pine Ridge Ranger District
- Wall Ranger District

Region 2 – Rocky Mountain Region (Continued)

Pike – San Isabel National Forests, and Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands

- Cimarron National Grassland
- Comanche National Grassland
- Leadville Ranger District
- Pikes Peak Ranger District
- Salida Ranger District
- San Carlos Ranger District
- South Park Ranger District
- South Platte Ranger District

Rio Grande National Forest

- Conejos Peak Ranger District
- Creede Ranger District
- Divide Ranger District
- Saguache Ranger District

San Juan National Forest

- Columbine Ranger District
- Dolores Ranger District
- Pagosa Ranger District

Shoshone National Forest

- North Zone Ranger District
- Washakie Ranger District
- Wind River Ranger District

White River National Forest

- Aspen Ranger District
- Blanco Ranger District
- Dillon Ranger District
- Eagle Ranger District
- Holy Cross Ranger District
- Rifle Ranger District
- Sopris Ranger District

Region 3 – Southwest Region

Regional Headquarters – Albuquerque, NM

Apache – Sitgreaves National Forest

- Alpine Ranger District
- Clifton Ranger District
- Black Mesa Ranger District
- Springerville Ranger District
- Lakeside Ranger District

Carson National Forest

- Canjilon Ranger District
- El Rito Ranger District
- Jicarilla Ranger District
- Camino Real Ranger District
- Tres Piedras Ranger District
- Questa Ranger District

Cibola National Forest

- Black Kettle Ranger District
- Kiowa and Rita Blanca Ranger District
- Magdalena Ranger District
- Mountainair Ranger District
- Mt. Taylor Ranger District
- Sandia Ranger District

Coconino National Forest

- Flagstaff Ranger District
- Red Rock Ranger District
- Mogollon Rim Ranger District

Coronado National Forest

- Douglas Ranger District
- Nogales Ranger District
- Sierra Vista Ranger District
- Safford Ranger District
- Santa Catalina Ranger District

Region 3 – Southwest Region (Continued)**Gila National Forest**

- Black Range Ranger District
- Glenwood Ranger District
- Quemado Ranger District
- Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument and Gila Visitor Center
- Reserve Ranger District
- Silver City Ranger District
- Wilderness Ranger District

Kaibab National Forest

- South Kaibab Ranger District
- Tusayan Ranger District
- Williams Ranger District

Lincoln National Forest

- Smokey Bear Ranger District
- Sacramento Ranger District
- Guadalupe Ranger District

Prescott National Forest

- Bradshaw Ranger District
- Chino Valley Ranger District
- Verde Ranger District

Santa Fe National Forest

- Coyote Ranger District
- Cuba Ranger District
- Jemez Ranger District
- Pecos / Las Vegas Ranger District
- Espanola Ranger District

Tonto National Forest

- Cave Creek Ranger District
- Globe Ranger District
- Mesa Ranger District
- Payson Ranger District
- Pleasant Valley Ranger District
- Tonto Basin Ranger District

Region 4 – Intermountain Region
Regional Headquarters – Ogden, UT

Ashley National Forest

- Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area
- Flaming Gorge / Vernal Ranger District
- Duchesne / Roosevelt Ranger District

Boise National Forest

- Cascade Ranger District
- Emmett Ranger District
- Idaho City Ranger District
- Lowman Ranger District
- Mountain Home Ranger District

Bridger-Teton National Forest

- Kemmerer Ranger District
- Big Piney Ranger District
- Greys River Ranger District
- Jackson Ranger District
- Buffalo Ranger District
- Pinedale Ranger District

Caribou-Targhee National Forest

- Ashton / Island Park Ranger District
- Dubois Ranger District
- Montpelier Ranger District
- Palisades Ranger District
- Soda Springs Ranger District
- Teton Basin Ranger District
- Westside Ranger District

Dixie National Forest

- Pine Valley Ranger District
- Cedar City Ranger District
- Powell Ranger District
- Escalante Ranger District

Fishlake National Forest

- Fillmore Ranger District
- Fremont River Ranger District
- Teasdale Office Ranger District
- Beaver Ranger District
- Richfield Ranger District

Region 4 – Intermountain Region (Continued)

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

- Carson Ranger District
- Bridgeport Ranger District
- Spring Mountains National Recreation Area
- Austin Ranger District
- Tonopah Ranger District
- Ely Ranger District
- Mountain City Ranger District
- Ruby Mountains / Jarbridge Ranger District
- Santa Rosa Ranger District

Manti-La Sal

- Sanpete Ranger District
- Ferron Ranger District
- Price Ranger District
- Moab Ranger District
- Monticello Ranger District

Payette National Forest

- Council Ranger District
- Krassel Ranger District
- McCall Ranger District
- New Meadows Ranger District
- Weiser Ranger District

Salmon-Challis National Forest

- Salmon, Cobalt Ranger District
- Challis-Yankee Fork Ranger District
- Lost River Ranger District
- Middle Fork Ranger District
- North Fork Ranger District
- Leadore Ranger District

Sawtooth National Forest

- Minidoka Ranger District
- Ketchum Ranger District
- Sawtooth National Recreation Area
- Fairfield Ranger District

Region 4 – Intermountain Region (Continued)

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest

- Heber-Kamas Ranger District
- Pleasant Grove Ranger District
- Spanish Fork Ranger District
- Salt Lake Ranger District
- Evanston / Mountain View Ranger District
- Ogden Ranger District
- Logan Ranger District

Region 5 – Pacific Southwest Region

Regional Headquarters – Vallejo, CA

Angeles National Forest

- Los Angeles River Ranger District
- San Gabriel River Ranger District
- Santa Clara / Mojave Rivers Ranger District

Cleveland National Forest

- Descanso Ranger District
- Palomar Ranger District
- Trabuco Ranger District

Eldorado National Forest

- Amador Ranger District
- Georgetown Ranger District
- Pacific Ranger District
- Placerville Ranger District

Inyo National Forest

- Mono Lake Ranger District
- Mammoth Ranger District
- White Mountain Ranger District
- Mt. Whitney Ranger District

Klamath National Forest

- Goosenest Ranger District
- Happy Camp / Oak Knoll Ranger District
- Salmon / Scott River Ranger District

Lassen National Forest

- Almanor Ranger District
- Eagle Lake Ranger District
- Hat Creek Ranger District

Region 5 – Pacific Southwest Region (Continued)**Los Padres National Forest**

- Monterey Ranger District
- Santa Lucia Ranger District
- Santa Barbara Ranger District
- Ojai Ranger District
- Mt. Pinos Ranger District

Mendocino National Forest

- Covelo Ranger District
- Grindstone Ranger District
- Upper Lake Ranger District

Modoc National Forest

- Warner Mountain Ranger District
- Big Valley Ranger District
- Devil's Garden Ranger District
- Doublehead Ranger District

Six Rivers National Forest

- Lower Trinity Ranger District
- Mad River Ranger District
- Orleans Ranger District
- Gasquet Ranger District / Smith River Recreation Area

Plumas National Forest

- Beckworth Ranger District
- Feather River Ranger District
- Mt. Hough Ranger District

San Bernardino National Forest

- Mountaintop Ranger District
- Front Country Ranger District
- San Jacinto Ranger District

Sequoia National Forest

- Hume Lake Ranger District
- Western Divide Ranger District
- Kern River Ranger District

Region 5 – Pacific Southwest Region (Continued)

Shasta-Trinity National Forest

- Shasta McCloud Management Unit
- South Fork Management Unit
- Trinity River Management Unit
- Wiskeytown – Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area

Sierra National Forest

- High Sierra Ranger District
- Bass Lake Ranger District

Stanislaus National Forest

- Calaveras Ranger District
- Groveland Ranger District
- Mi-Wok Ranger District
- Summit Ranger District

Tahoe National Forest

- Yuba River Ranger District
- American River Ranger District
- Sierraville Ranger District
- Truckee Ranger District

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

Region 6 – Pacific Northwest Region

Regional Headquarters – Portland, CA

Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

Colville National Forest

- Newport Ranger District
- Republic Ranger District
- Sullivan Lake Ranger District
- Three Rivers Ranger District

Deschutes National Forest

- Bend Fort Rock Ranger District
- Crescent Ranger District
- Sisters Ranger District

Region 6 – Pacific Northwest Region (Continued)

Fremont – Winema National Forest

- Bly Ranger District
- Chemult Ranger District
- Chiloquin Ranger District
- Klamath Ranger District
- Lakeview Ranger District
- Paisley Ranger District
- Silver Lake Ranger District

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

- Cowlitz Valley Ranger District
- Mt. Adams Ranger District
- Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument Headquarters

Malheur National Forest

- Blue Mountain Ranger District
- Emigrant Creek Ranger District
- Prairie City Ranger District

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie

- Darrington Ranger District
- Mt. Baker Ranger District
- Skykomish Ranger District
- Snoqualmie Ranger District

Mt. Hood National Forest

- Barlow Ranger District
- Clackamas River Ranger District
- Hood River Ranger District
- Zigzag Ranger District

Ochoco National Forest

- Crooked River Ranger District
- Lookout Mountain Ranger District
- Paulina Ranger District

Region 6 – Pacific Northwest Region (Continued)**Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest**

- Chelan Ranger District
- Cle Elum Ranger District
- Entiat Ranger District
- Methow Valley Ranger District
- Naches Ranger District
- Tonasket Ranger District
- Wenatchee River Ranger District

Olympic National Forest

- Hood Canal Ranger District
- Pacific Ranger District

Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest

- Gold Beach Ranger District
- High Cascades Ranger District
- Powers Ranger District
- Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District
- Wild Rivers Ranger District

Siuslaw National Forest

- Central Coast Ranger District
- Hebo Ranger District

Umatilla National Forest

- Heppner Ranger District
- North Fork John Day Ranger District
- Pomeroy Ranger District
- Walla Walla Ranger District

Umpqua National Forest

- Cottage Grove Ranger District
- Diamond Lake Ranger District
- Dorena Genetic Resource Center
- North Umpqua Ranger District
- Tiller Ranger District

Wallow-Whitman National Forest

- Eagle Cap Ranger District
- La Grande Ranger District
- Wallow Valley Ranger District
- Whitman Ranger District
- Hells Canyon National Recreation Area

Region 6 – Pacific Northwest Region (Continued)

Willamette National Forest

- Detroit Ranger District
- McKenzie River Ranger District
- Middle Fork Ranger District
- Sweet Home Ranger District

Region 8 – Southern Region

Regional Headquarters – Atlanta, GA

Cherokee National Forest

- Unaka Ranger District
- Ocoee Ranger District
- Tellico Ranger District
- Watauga Ranger District

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

- Conasauga Ranger District
- Blue Ridge Ranger District
- Chattooga River Ranger District
- Oconee Ranger District

Daniel Boone National Forest

- Cumberland Ranger District
- London Ranger District
- Redbird Ranger District
- Stearns Ranger District

El Yunque National Forest

Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests

- Andrew Pickens Ranger District
- Enoree Ranger District
- Francis Marion Ranger District
- Long Cane Ranger District

Region 8 – Southern Region (Continued)

George Washington and Jefferson National Forests

- Clinch Ranger District
- Eastern Divide Ranger District
- Glenwood – Pedlar Ranger Districts
- James River Ranger District
- Lee Ranger District
- Mount Rogers National Recreation Area
- North River Ranger District
- Warm Springs Ranger District

Kisatchie National Forest

- Caney Ranger District
- Catahoula Ranger District
- Calcasieu Ranger District
- Kisatchie Ranger District
- Winn Ranger District

Land Between The Lakes National Recreation Area

National Forests in Alabama

- Bankhead Ranger District
- Conecuh Ranger District
- Oakmulgee Ranger District
- Shoal Creek Ranger District
- Talladega Ranger District
- Tuskegee Ranger District

National Forests in Florida

- Apalachicola Ranger District
- Wakulla Ranger District
- Osceola Ranger District
- Seminole Ranger District
- Lake George Ranger District

National Forests in Mississippi

- Bienville Ranger District
- Chickasawhay Ranger District
- Delta Ranger District
- Desoto Ranger District
- Holly Springs Ranger District
- Tombigbee Ranger District
- Homochitto Ranger District

Region 8 – Southern Region (Continued)

National Forests in North Carolina

- Appalachian Ranger District
- Croatan Ranger District
- Cheoah Ranger District
- Grandfather Ranger District
- Nantahala Ranger District
- Pisgah Ranger District
- Tusquitee Ranger District
- Uwharrie Ranger District

National Forests in Texas

- Angelina National Forest
- Caddo and LBJ National Grasslands
- Davy Crockett National Forest
- Sabine National Forest
- Sam Houston National Forest

Ouachita National Forest

- Caddo – Womble Ranger District
- Jessieville – Winona – Fourche Ranger District
- Mena – Oden Ranger District
- Poteau – Cold Springs Ranger District
- Oklahoma Ranger District

Ozark - St. Francis National Forest

- Big Piney Ranger District
- Boston Mountain Ranger District
- Magazine Ranger District
- Pleasant Hill Ranger District
- St. Francis Ranger District
- Sylamore Ranger District

Savannah River Site

Region 9 – Eastern Region

Regional Headquarters – Milwaukee, WI

Allegheny National Forest

- Bradford Ranger District
- Marienville Ranger District

Region 9 – Eastern Region (Continued)

Chequamegon – Nicolet National Forest

- Eagle River – Florence Ranger District
- Great Divide Ranger District
- Lakewood – Laona Ranger District
- Medford – Park Falls Ranger District
- Washburn Ranger District

Chippewa National Forest

- Blackduck Ranger District
- Deer River Ranger District
- Walker Ranger District

Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest

- Hector Ranger District
- Manchester Ranger District
- Middlebury Ranger District
- Rochester Ranger District

Hiawatha National Forest

- Manistique / Rapid River Ranger District
- Munising Ranger District
- Saint Ignace / Sault Ste Marie Ranger District

Hoosier National Forest

- Brownstown Ranger District
- Tell City Ranger District

Huron-Manistee National Forest

- Cadillac / Manistee Ranger District
- Baldwin / White Cloud Ranger District
- Huron Shores Ranger District
- Mio Ranger District

Mark Twain

- Ava / Cassville / Willow Springs Ranger District
- Eleven Point Ranger District
- Houston / Rolla / Cedar Creek Ranger District
- Poplar Bluff Ranger District
- Potosi / Fredericktown Ranger District
- Salem Ranger District

Region 9 – Eastern Region (Continued)

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Monongahela National Forest

- Cheat / Potomac Ranger District
- Gauley Ranger District
- Greenbrier Ranger District
- Marlinton / White Sulphur Ranger District

Ottawa National Forest

- Bessemer Ranger District
- Iron River Ranger District
- Kenton Ranger District
- Ontonagon Ranger District
- Watersmeet Ranger District

Shawnee National Forest

- Hidden Springs Ranger District
- Mississippi Bluffs Ranger District

Superior National Forest

- Gunflint Ranger District
- Kawishiwi Ranger District
- LaCroix Ranger District
- Laurentian Ranger District
- Tofte Ranger District

Wayne National Forest

- Athens Ranger District
- Ironton Ranger District

White Mountain National Forest

- Androscoggin Ranger District
- Pemigewasset Ranger District
- Saco Ranger District

Region 10 – Alaska Region

Regional Headquarters – Juneau, AK

Chugach National Forest

- Cordova Ranger District
- Glacier Ranger District
- Seward Ranger District

Region 10 – Alaska Region (Continued)**Tongass National Forest**

- Craig Ranger District
- Hoonah Ranger District
- Juneau Ranger District – Admiralty National Monument
- Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District
- Petersburg Ranger District
- Sitka Ranger District
- Thorne Bay Ranger District
- Wrangell Ranger District
- Yakutat Ranger District

Research and Development Stations

- International Institute of Tropical Forestry – headquartered in San Juan, Puerto Rico
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – headquartered in Portland, OR
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – headquartered in Albany, CA
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – headquartered in Fort Collins, CO
- Northern Research Station – headquartered in Newtown Square, PA
- Southern Research Station – headquartered in Asheville, NC
- Forest Products Laboratory – headquartered in Madison, WI

Calvert Q2: Please provide a summary of the condition of each National Forest including region, forest and district level as appropriate.

Answer: In 2010, the Forest Service began formally classifying and tracking the condition of watersheds on our national forests. This is currently our best tool for understanding the condition of each Forest. Since 2010, we have improved the condition class of 34 watersheds representing approximately 620,000 acres. By the end of this fiscal year an additional 19 watersheds, or approximately 250,000 more acres, will be restored to an improved watershed condition.

The tables below display a summary of the number and acres of watersheds by condition class for each region and forest. Detailed information associated with a specific forest or watershed can be found at the following link: <http://apps.fs.usda.gov/WCFmapviewer/>

Number of Watersheds by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	158	133		292
Bitterroot National Forest	57	30		87
Clearwater National Forest	68	31	4	103
Custer National Forest	77	45		122

Number of Watersheds by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Dakota Prairie Grasslands	18	146	2	166
Flathead National Forest	153	5		159
Gallatin National Forest	122	25		147
Helena National Forest	15	80	28	123
Idaho Panhandle National Forest	74	94	5	173
Kootenai National Forest	127	16		143
Lewis And Clark National Forest	85	68	6	159
Lolo National Forest	64	103		167
Nez Perce National Forest	73	41	3	117
Total in Region 1	1,091	817	48	1,958
Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest	60	87	8	155
Bighorn National Forest	11	52	1	64
Black Hills National Forest	43	52		95
Grand Mesa Uncompahgre Gunnison National Forest	156	75		231
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest	80	178		258
Nebraska National Forest	100	40		147
Pike-San Isabel National Forest	185	83	14	282
Rio Grande National Forest	76	74	1	151
San Juan National Forest	71	63	3	139
Shoshone National Forest	119	16		135
White River National Forest	113	40		153
Total in Region 2	1,014	760	27	1,810
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest	33	105	14	152
Carson National Forest	18	81	1	100
Cibola National Forest	161	50	1	212
Coconino National Forest	23	66	13	102
Coronado National Forest	133	75		208
Gila National Forest	98	81	1	180
Kaibab National Forest	30	51	18	99
Lincoln National Forest	7	78	18	103
Prescott National Forest	11	83	3	97
Santa Fe National Forest	8	103	5	116
Tonto National Forest	19	122	37	178
Total in Region 3	541	895	111	1,547

Number of Watersheds by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Ashley National Forest	57	50		107
Boise National Forest	16	134	21	171
Bridger-Teton National Forest	158	13		171
Caribou-Targhee National Forest	122	130	8	260
Dixie National Forest	32	93	28	153
Fishlake National Forest	88	39		127
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest	33	419	47	499
Manti-Lasal National Forest	98	22		120
Payette National Forest	75	44	29	148
Salmon-Challis National Forest	249	46		295
Sawtooth National Forest	122	56		178
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest	83	108	9	200
Total in Region 4	1,133	1,154	142	2,429
Angeles National Forest	16	34	9	60
Cleveland National Forest	31	16		47
Eldorado National Forest	5	37	1	43
Inyo National Forest	112	13		125
Klamath National Forest	88	27		115
Lake Tahoe Basin Mgt Unit	3	7		10
Lassen National Forest	102	12		114
Los Padres National Forest	98	51		149
Mendocino National Forest	67	1		70
Modoc National Forest	101	19		120
Plumas National Forest	27	58	1	86
San Bernardino National Forest	14	39	15	68
Sequoia National Forest	50	32	1	83
Shasta Trinity National Forest	100	42	3	145
Sierra National Forest	31	34		65
Six Rivers National Forest	35	26	1	62
Stanislaus National Forest	39	21		60
Tahoe National Forest	19	47	1	67
Total in Region 5	938	516	32	1,489
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area	5	5		10

Number of Watersheds by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Colville National Forest	15	73	1	89
Deschutes National Forest	98	22		120
Fremont-Winema National Forests	98	82		180
Gifford Pinchot National Forest	33	72		105
Malheur National Forest	56	95	1	152
Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest	99	29		128
Mt Hood National Forest	57	19		76
Ochoco National Forest	24	54		78
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests	97	148	4	249
Olympic National Forest	25	33		58
Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forests	82	43		125
Siuslaw National Forest	37	39		76
Umatilla National Forest	72	55		127
Umpqua National Forest	29	43		72
Wallowa Whitman National Forest	48	129	24	201
Willamette National Forest	40	56	5	101
Total in Region 6	915	997	35	1,947
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest	52	78		130
Cherokee National Forest	26	36		62
Daniel Boone National Forest	27	68	1	96
El Yunque National Forest	7	1		8
Francis Marion-Sumter National Forest		51	25	76
George Washington And Jefferson National Forests	87	103		190
Kisatchie National Forest	72	3		75
Land Between The Lakes NRA		11		11
National Forests In Alabama	71			71
National Forests In Florida	6	74	3	83
National Forests In Mississippi	40	108	4	152
National Forests In North Carolina	11	142		153
National Forests In Texas	23	74		97
Ouachita National Forest	57	104	1	162
Ozark-St Francis National Forest	70	31		101

Number of Watersheds by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Total in Region 8	549	884	34	1,467
Allegheny National Forest	2	40		42
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest	59	89		148
Chippewa National Forest	10	68		78
Green Mountain And Finger Lakes National Forests	35	14		49
Hiawatha National Forest	40	39		79
Hoosier National Forest	6	39		45
Huron Manistee National Forest	23	87		110
Mark Twain National Forest	15	158	6	179
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie		5		5
Monongahela National Forest	19	58		77
Ottawa National Forest	41	47		88
Shawnee National Forest	32	17		49
Superior National Forest	179	4		183
Wayne National Forest		30	11	41
White Mountain National Forest	47	24		71
Total in Region 9	508	719	17	1,244
Chugach National Forest	267	2		269
Tongass National Forest	917	4		921
Total in Region 10	1,184	6		1,190
Grand Total	7,873	6,748	446	15,081

Acres of NFS by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	1,695,567	1,668,098		3,363,665
Bitterroot National Forest	1,186,577	397,459		1,584,036
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest	2,984,538	988,219	85,438	4,058,195
Custer National Forest	715,858	479,184		1,195,042
Dakota Prairie Grasslands	88,336	1,110,901	27,789	1,227,026

Acres of NFS by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Flathead National Forest	2,305,996	77,043		2,383,039
Gallatin National Forest	1,594,176	266,606		1,860,782
Helena National Forest	119,326	549,350	300,673	969,349
Idaho Panhandle National Forest	1,074,392	1,347,637	54,230	2,476,259
Kootenai National Forest	1,985,896	256,115		2,242,011
Lewis And Clark National Forest	1,008,467	743,888	95,472	1,847,827
Lolo National Forest	612,900	1,558,767		2,171,667
Total in Region 1	15,372,028	9,443,267	563,602	25,378,897
Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest	422,774	1,015,618	109,038	1,547,430
Bighorn National Forest	107,534	985,437	6,597	1,099,568
Black Hills National Forest	424,156	809,971		1,234,127
Grand Mesa Uncompahgre Gunnison National Forest	1,967,469	993,854		2,961,323
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest	595,064	2,265,125		2,860,189
Nebraska National Forest	689,766	336,464		1,026,230
Pike-San Isabel National Forest	1,464,548	957,311	315,473	2,737,332
Rio Grande National Forest	753,487	1,052,253	28,002	1,833,742
San Juan National Forest	1,070,995	751,434	37,499	1,859,928
Shoshone National Forest	2,231,394	179,625		2,411,019
White River National Forest	1,587,561	697,340		2,284,901
Total in Region 2	11,314,748	10,044,432	496,609	21,855,789
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest	408,156	1,331,429	229,510	1,969,095
Carson National Forest	176,154	1,261,141	11,775	1,449,070
Cibola National Forest	1,163,142	673,251	10,934	1,847,327
Coconino National Forest	315,319	1,270,391	265,220	1,850,930
Coronado National Forest	1,044,936	662,145		1,707,081
Gila National Forest	1,638,669	1,615,165	31,331	3,285,165
Kaibab National Forest	274,726	838,368	444,726	1,557,820
Lincoln National Forest	42,485	834,887	209,660	1,087,032
Prescott National Forest	118,767	1,107,870	43,773	1,270,410
Santa Fe National Forest	84,770	1,476,730	78,452	1,639,952
Tonto National Forest	307,962	1,825,899	723,615	2,857,476
Total in Region 3	5,575,086	12,897,276	2,048,996	20,521,358

Acres of NFS by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Ashley National Forest	79,904	576,757		656,661
Boise National Forest	246,161	1,785,044	235,619	2,266,824
Bridger-Teton National Forest	3,277,624	157,934		3,435,558
Caribou-Targhee National Forest	1,158,187	1,625,247	82,829	2,866,263
Dixie National Forest	198,546	1,217,958	458,529	1,875,033
Fishlake National Forest	848,205	599,157		1,447,362
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest	454,403	4,981,850	784,103	6,220,356
Manti-Lasal National Forest	945,617	381,355		1,326,972
Payette National Forest	1,342,339	527,554	481,637	2,351,530
Salmon-Challis National Forest	3,517,452	717,543		4,234,995
Sawtooth National Forest	1,412,840	719,541		2,132,381
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest	755,465	1,305,130	92,328	2,152,923
Total in Region 4	14,236,743	14,595,070	2,135,045	30,966,858
Angeles National Forest	90,259	403,051	126,383	619,693
Cleveland National Forest	221,169	195,887		417,056
Eldorado National Forest	73,892	498,920	12,685	585,497
Inyo National Forest	1,686,132	286,877		1,973,009
Klamath National Forest	1,215,754	479,356		1,695,110
Lake Tahoe Basin Mgt Unit	40,051	103,595		143,646
Lassen National Forest	970,240	190,155		1,160,395
Los Padres National Forest	901,077	886,552		1,787,629
Mendocino National Forest	905,227	18,004		923,231
Modoc National Forest	1,401,180	239,116		1,640,296
Plumas National Forest	325,806	830,898	29,321	1,186,025
San Bernardino National Forest	59,841	389,216	209,075	658,132
Sequoia National Forest	605,312	495,075	8,156	1,108,543
Shasta Trinity National Forest	1,374,025	721,248	36,933	2,132,206
Sierra National Forest	585,313	714,466		1,299,779
Six Rivers National Forest	581,602	382,813	14,011	978,426
Stanislaus National Forest	576,678	332,694		909,372
Tahoe National Forest	239,859	615,341	2,641	857,841
Total in Region 5	11,853,417	7,783,264	439,205	20,075,886

Acres of NFS by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area	68,426	22,055		90,481
Colville National Forest	258,452	824,278	7,636	1,090,366
Deschutes National Forest	1,286,113	329,377		1,615,490
Fremont-Winema National Forests	979,765	1,260,142		2,239,907
Gifford Pinchot National Forest	367,150	982,027		1,349,177
Malheur National Forest	421,355	1,273,846	10,918	1,706,119
Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest	1,424,708	418,286		1,842,994
Mt Hood National Forest	764,846	238,111		1,002,957
Ochoco National Forest	162,096	563,250		725,346
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests	1,578,430	2,293,273	34,360	3,906,063
Olympic National Forest	285,419	343,061		628,480
Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forests	1,122,302	547,157		1,669,459
Siuslaw National Forest	296,881	324,197		621,078
Umatilla National Forest	768,135	646,946		1,415,081
Umpqua National Forest	408,057	575,193		983,250
Wallowa Whitman National Forest	656,948	1,386,787	193,685	2,237,420
Willamette National Forest	728,139	870,928	88,935	1,688,002
Total in Region 6	11,577,222	12,898,914	335,534	24,811,670
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest	207,232	647,141		854,373
Cherokee National Forest	213,096	452,359		665,455
Daniel Boone National Forest	194,320	476,826	26,242	697,388
El Yunque National Forest	21,296	5,181		26,477
Francis Marion-Sumter National Forest		397,271	223,865	621,136
George Washington And Jefferson National Forests	584,524	1,184,848		1,769,372
Kisatchie National Forest	583,248	20,475		603,723
Land Between The Lakes NRA		169,656		169,656
National Forests In Alabama	663,457			663,457
National Forests In Florida	103,019	1,037,582	43,268	1,183,869
National Forests In Mississippi	252,695	886,045	37,269	1,176,009

Acres of NFS by Watershed Condition Class by National Forest				
Unit Name	Functioning Properly	Functioning at Risk	Impaired Function	Grand Total
National Forests In North Carolina	81,576	1,155,130		1,236,706
National Forests In Texas	149,749	511,942		661,691
Ouachita National Forest	919,529	860,779	1,730	1,782,038
Ozark-St Francis National Forest	903,769	235,058		1,138,827
Total in Region 8	4,877,510	8,040,293	332,374	13,250,177
Allegheny National Forest	27,775	482,596		510,371
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest	555,100	959,237		1,514,337
Chippewa National Forest	75,371	592,460		667,831
Green Mountain And Finger Lakes National Forests	343,085	74,650		417,735
Hiawatha National Forest	418,313	461,677		879,990
Hoosier National Forest	19,683	179,869		199,552
Huron Manistee National Forest	176,378	786,951		963,329
Mark Twain National Forest	225,112	1,166,409	95,093	1,486,614
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie		17,697		17,697
Monongahela National Forest	141,149	764,994		906,143
Ottawa National Forest	400,662	588,944		989,606
Shawnee National Forest	179,732	95,230		27,4962
Superior National Forest	2,126,227	43,996		2,170,223
Wayne National Forest		171,415	67,996	239,411
White Mountain National Forest	443,261	350,408		793,669
Total in Region 9	5,131,848	6,736,533	163,089	12,031,470
Chugach National Forest	5,126,479	23,773		5,150,252
Tongass National Forest	16,703,322	92,392		16,795,714
Total in Region 10	21,829,801	116,165		21,945,966
Grand Total	102,513,296	82,555,214	6,514,454	191,582,964

Calvert Q3: What is the status of the agency's terrestrial condition framework?

Answer: The Terrestrial Condition Assessment (TCA) examines effects of multiple stressors on National Forest System lands, with an emphasis on identifying restoration opportunities at a national scale. This assessment is focused on landscape ecosystems, is data driven, and is designed to be transparent and able to incorporate finer-scaled regional data. The first version of

the TCA will be complete by the end of FY 2015. Compilation and initial analysis of national data is complete, and a system for web-based field review of data and results is being developed. During FY 2016, we will review, refine, and apply the TCA as a tool to identify and communicate restoration opportunities across National Forest System lands.

Calvert Q4: Please update the information provided in the FY 2015 QFRs regarding the breakout of the amount of hazardous fuels funding spent inside and outside of the WUI, as well as inside and outside of areas identified in Community Wildfire Protection Plans.

Answer: The acres treated with Hazardous Fuels funds from 2010 to 2014 and the percent of treatment in areas adjacent to communities with Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are listed below. The acres in wildland urban-interface (WUI) and non-WUI are for the Hazardous Fuels budget line items (BLI) funds only and include funding that is part of the Integrated Resource Restoration pilot program. These figures do not include funding from other BLIs (for example, Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management) that also contribute to hazardous fuels reduction goals. The CWPP figures are the percentage of all acres treated that result in hazardous fuels reduction outcomes.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
WUI (acres)	1,154,127	805,149	1,032,987	1,006,849	1,124,583
Non-WUI (acres)	765,128	370,180	317,200	305,789	277,558
CWPP	45%	61%	93%	85%	77%

Calvert Q5: How many acres of NFS lands did the Forest Service treat in fiscal year 2014? Please break this down by:

- a. Acres mechanically treated.

Answer: A total of 708,000 acres were mechanically treated.

- b. Acres mechanically treated using commercial timber harvest.

Answer: 193,000 acres that were treated using commercial timber harvest.

- c. Acres treated with prescribed fire (please describe the number of acres treated with prescribed fire that were wildfires burning within prescription, fires being allowed to burn to achieve resource objectives, or acres burned in back fires as part of suppression efforts).

Answer: 1,358,000 acres were treated with prescribed fire; additionally, 246,000 acres were "treated" by wildfire (note: these are acres burned by a natural-ignition wildfire that were later reviewed and compared to Land Management Plan (LMP) desired conditions to determine if the outcome furthered the goals of the specific LMP). We do not track the number of acres burned in back fires as part of suppression efforts because it is very difficult in most instances to determine where the backfire and head fire meet, thus it would be a

subjective measure. These acres are included in the acres reported as the final acres for each fire.

d. Acres treated using other tools besides prescribed fire and mechanical thinning.

Answer: There were 296,000 acres treated by biological methods, biomass removal, chemical methods, chipping, crushing, grazing, lop and scatter, machine pile, mastication or mowing.

Calvert Q6: Please provide a list of the forest product output categories and the amount of each for FY 2014. Include target and actual data.

Answer: The tables below show FY 2014 accomplishments for convertible and non-convertible forest products. Targets are only assigned for total volume of convertible products sold. The unit of measure for all convertible products is shown in thousand board feet. The unit of measure for non-convertible products varies and they are reported below in dollar value sold. Some products have been grouped for simplicity.

Convertible Forest Products¹		
<i>Thousand Board Feet</i>		
Product	Volume Target	Volume Sold
Sawtimber	N/A	1,715,937
Pulpwood	N/A	520,374
Fuelwood	N/A	291,644
Biomass	N/A	87,150
Other Products	N/A	215,895
All Convertible Products	2,800,000	2,831,000

Non-Convertible Forest Products²		
Product	Target	Sold Value (\$)
Christmas trees	N/A	982,695
Limbs / Boughs	N/A	559,772
Mushrooms	N/A	357,705
Foliage	N/A	255,038
Grass	N/A	234,567
All Non-Convertible Products		2,389,777

¹ The category of "Convertible Forest Products" includes all wood products that can be converted to board feet.

² The category of "Non-Convertible Forest Products" includes all wood products that cannot be converted to board feet but, instead, are tracked by the total value of the sold product.

Calvert Q7: Please provide a breakout of funding allocated to each of the activities conducted by the International Forestry program. Include staff time allocated to each.

Answer: International Forestry's funding and staff allocations are described in the table below.

Activity	FY 2015 Budget Allocation	FY 2015 Staff Allocation (FTEs)
Illegal Logging	\$5,150,000	18
Migratory Species	\$1,500,000	6
Invasive Species	\$350,000	2
Policy	\$1,000,000	4
Total	\$8,000,000	30

Calvert Q8: Please provide additional information on the agency's plan to transfer approximately \$1,500,000 to the Bureau of Land Management to support the Wild Horse and Burro Program.

a. How much was transferred in FY 2014 and FY 2015?

Answer: In FY 2014, \$1,386,048 was transferred to the Bureau of Land Management and an additional \$1,482,397 was transferred in FY 2015.

b. Through what statutory mechanism is the funding transferred?

Answer: The funding is transferred through the Service First authority:

(Section 330, Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 106-291, 114 Stat. 922, 996, 43 U.S.C. § 1701 note, as amended by Section 428 of the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-54, 119 Stat. 499, 555; Section 418, Div. E, of the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009, Pub. L. No. 111-8, 123 Stat. 524, 747; and Section 422, Div. E, of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012, Pub. L. No. 112-74, 125 Stat. 1045.)

c. What is the funding used for?

Answer: The BLM uses the funding to provide care and treatment for excess horses and burros removed from National Forest System lands and placed in Bureau of Land Management Off-Range Corrals and Off-Range Pastures.

d. Does the Forest Service support a particular herd of wild horses and burros?

Answer: The Forest Service currently supports multiple wild horse and/or burro populations on 34 territories. A territory consists of one or more herd units of wild free-roaming horses and burros.

Calvert Q9: How many data centers has the agency consolidated over the past three fiscal years? What is the savings associated with the consolidation?

Answer: Since 2012, the Forest Service completed the shutdown of the Oregon and Washington Office data centers as part of the Forest Service data center consolidation. The shutting down of these two centers enable the Forest Service to avoid expending over \$500,000 annually in hardware maintenance and facility support costs.

Calvert Q10: How many additional data centers will be consolidated in FY 2016 and future fiscal years and what are the anticipated savings associated with these actions?

Answer: Through the Data Center Transformation project, the Forest Service is building a shared service Virtual Data Center within the USDA's National Information Technology Center. We are considering the closure of the Albuquerque Data Center in late 2017. This Data Center is the primary development and testing center for over 200 applications supported by the CIO. The closure of this Data Center will enable the cost avoidance of \$3 million in maintenance, server replacement and hosting costs annually. Please note the closure of facility itself often results in costs. For this reason, the \$3 million figure should not be construed as a net savings. Furthermore, this proposal would need to undergo additional review before we can commit to this action.

Calvert Q11: How much did the agency spend on fire retardant in FY 2014 and FY 2015 (estimated)?

Answer: In FY 2014, the agency spent \$31,060,160 on fire retardant. An estimate for FY 2015 Forest Service retardant use would be roughly \$36,000,000, assuming we have an above average fire year.

Calvert Q12: Please provide a summary of the agency's new regulation regarding Annual Operating Instructions. Why are appeals not permitted under the new regulation?

Answer: As stipulated as part of the Forest Service Term Grazing Permit, annual operating instructions are developed in conjunction with the permittee to identify the obligations of the permittee and the Forest Service and to clearly articulate annual grazing management requirements, standards, and monitoring necessary to document compliance. Annual operating instructions are not appealable because they are not decision documents and cannot permanently modify a grazing permit. Annual operating instructions merely specify those annual actions that are needed to implement the management direction set forth in the previous project-level NEPA-based decision.

Questions from Mr. Simpson

Wildfire Funding

Chief Tidwell, your budget proposes to change the way that we budget for wildfires by funding catastrophic fires the same way we fund similar natural disasters, like hurricanes and floods. I strongly support the intent of this language, which would end the disastrous practice of fire borrowing in order to pay for fire suppression.

Simpson Q1: Can you explain why this is important?

Answer: The Administration's proposal for a new wildfire funding mechanism would allow us to continue to manage most wildland fires as we currently do, but would treat those fires that are most destructive and most costly outside of our budget. Approximately 1 percent of fires result in about 30 percent of suppression costs, and this new wildfire funding mechanism would allow those fires to be considered natural disasters.

This is important for multiple reasons. The cost of fire management has grown from 13 percent of the agency's budget in the 1990s to over 50 percent in 2014. With constrained budgets, this has meant other programs have suffered diminished budgets. Taking these 1 percent most expensive fires – approximately 30 percent of our fire suppression costs – out of our constrained, discretionary budget will allow us to invest further in the restoration and active management programs that will improve the health and resilience of forests and grasslands, including making them more resistant to wildland fire.

Fire transfer is another problem this new wildfire funding mechanism will help alleviate. In years when the base appropriation for suppression is insufficient to cover the cost of fighting wildland fire, the agency has the authority to transfer funds from non-fire activities to suppression. These non-fire activities are often those that improve the health and resilience of our forested landscapes and thus mitigate the potential for fire in future years. Such fire transfers, while they are generally reimbursed in subsequent appropriations, are highly disruptive to agency operations and hinder the Forest Service's capacity to effectively restore the Nation's forests and grasslands. Work must stop to transfer funds and, although we may be able to do more work the following year with the reimbursed funds, the window for conducting that work may pass and other projects may become a priority.

Over the last few decades, wildfire suppression costs have increased as fire seasons have grown longer and the frequency, size, and severity of wildfires has increased due to climate change, drought, hazardous fuel buildups, insect and disease infestations, non-native species invasions, and other factors. These trends are expected to continue.

Simpson Q2: By making this change in the budget process to fighting wildfires, is it possible the Forest Service and Department of Interior will be able to mitigate the costs of future wildfires because they won't have to continually rob from the prevention costs?

Answer: There is no set of solutions that will definitively result in decreasing wildfire management costs because of factors outside of our control, such as expansion of the wildland

urban interface, climate change and increasing socio-political influences. Changing the mechanism to fund wildfire suppression by taking some of the cost of responding to these increasingly expensive to manage natural disasters out of the Forest Service's discretionary budget will help alleviate the need to continue cutting budgets to non-fire programs to fund the ever increasing cost of suppression. This and eliminating the need to transfer funds from hazardous fuels reduction and other important natural resource management programs to cover firefighting costs will allow us to invest even further in the restoration and active management programs that will improve the health and resilience of forests and grasslands. Every wildfire receives an appropriate, risk informed and effective response; increasing the resiliency of these lands will enable more options to be utilized in managing wildfire.

Simpson Q3: Can you explain why the budget cap adjustment is necessary to actually solve the problem?

Answer: The increasing cost of fighting wildland fire has a negative and lasting impact on the Forest Service's non-fire, mission critical activities. In particular, growth in fire expenditures has resulted in numerous fire transfers and a long-term shift of agency resources to fire expenditures. The budget cap adjustment proposal eliminates the need to transfer funds from hazardous fuels reduction and other important natural resource management programs to cover firefighting costs. The cap adjustment also eases the need to shift agency financial resources away from other programs to fund the full 10-year average of suppression costs using the agency's discretionary budget.

Simpson Q4: I hear from skeptics of the wildfire bill about how the Stafford Act includes wildfires. As you and I both know, that is not currently working and thus there is a need for a legislative fix. Can you explain why this bill is needed so we can treat wildfires like other natural disasters?

Answer: The Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act provides a mechanism for Federal natural disaster assistance to be supplied to State governments in support of wildfire, and it provides relief to help with impacts after a disaster has occurred. It does not enable the Federal government to access funds to support wildfire operations on Federal lands. The Administration's proposal to change how wildfire is funded for the Forest Service would allow us to continue to manage most wildland fires as we currently do, but take the most destructive and most costly fires outside of our budget. That strategy will allow us to even further invest in the restoration and active management programs to improve the health and resilience of forests and grasslands and eliminate the need to transfer funds for hazardous fuels reduction and other important natural resource management programs to cover firefighting costs.

Trails Funding (As it relates to Stanley to Red Fish Lake Trail)

Simpson Q5: Last week I introduced my wilderness bill with Senator Risch. As you know, one of the most important parts in the wilderness proposal is the Redfish Lake to Stanley trail. I look forward to working with you on this. Is there anything we can do within the FY16 budget to help accomplish this for my constituents?

Answer: The Sawtooth National Forest has nearly completed the first phase of environmental analysis and will be collecting data during the FY 2015 summer field season for the second phase of analysis. We will continue to work with your staff as we gather more information about this project. The proposed funding level in the FY 2016 President's Budget for the Trails Program would help address the deferred maintenance backlog and take care of the existing trails network, as recommended by the U.S. Government Accountability Office in Report GAO-13-618 – Forest Service Trails: Long- and Short-term Improvements Could Reduce Maintenance Backlog and Enhance System Sustainability.

Questions from Mr. Amodei**Fire and Aviation Management**

Amodei Q1: Does the Forest Service plan to operate their C-130 aircraft as “public aircraft”?

Answer: The Forest Service will use the C-130H aircraft as a public aircraft in aerial firefighting operations.

Amodei Q2: If so, how will the Forest Service address the issues of lower levels of safety allowed under “public aircraft”?

OMB Circular No. A-76, Transmittal Memorandum No. 20, states, “In the process of governing, the Government should not compete with its citizens. The competitive enterprise system, characterized by individual freedom and initiative, is the primary source of national economic strength. In recognition of this principle, it has been and continues to be the general policy of the Government to rely on commercial sources to supply the products and services the Government needs.

Answer: The Forest Service does not operate at lower levels of safety when conducting Forest Service or contract Public Aircraft Operations. The agency has established policies, procedures, standards and contracts to maintain a high level of safety during civil and public aircraft operations. These policies, procedures, standards and contracts apply to all Forest Service flights and in many cases meet or exceed 14 CFR Federal aviation regulations.

The Forest Service will continue working with the United States Coast Guard and use their airworthiness standards in order to maintain the current high level of safety enforced by the Coast Guard in their C-130H fleet. This coordination will include parts, quality assurance, inspections, and periodic depot maintenance to ensure that the C-130H aircraft will have a level of safety that meets or exceeds that required of our current Forest Service-owned and contractor owned aircraft.

Amodei Q3: Is the Forest Service complying with OMB Circular No. A-76, Transmittal Memorandum No. 20 with regard to its acquisition of C-130 aircraft, and Large Airtanker Modernization Strategy?

The Forest Service recently issued a Next Generation II solicitation for airtankers with a potential performance date of May 2015. There is a possibility that only one company can meet this requirement. In December 2013, the Forest Service attempted to award a sole-source, noncompetitive contract to one company. In April 2014, the Government Accountability Office ruled that the agency’s decision to award this contract without competition was improper.

Answer: The Forest Service is in compliance with A-76. The Forest Service will comply with A-76 requirements by completing the required Aviation Business Case for the potential acquisition of an aircraft that will be submitted to OMB.

Amodei Q4: Is the Forest Service likely to receive protest from the other companies for this Next Generation II solicitation as it did with the sole-source, noncompetitive contract?

Answer: The Forest Service has received two protests related to the Next Generation 2.0 solicitation. Those protests have been submitted to the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Amodei Q5: How are contract performance dates and interagency airtanker board requirements enforced, and how are extended time periods to attempt compliance reviewed and determined?

Answer: Contract performance dates or Mandatory Availability Periods and interagency airtanker board requirements are enforced through the contract. Extended time periods for compliance are determined by the Forest Service and the interagency airtanker board.

Amodei Q6: Does the Forest Service possess the aviation expertise in terms of personnel and structure to conduct and oversee an airtanker fleet of its own?

Answer: Yes. The Forest Service has the expertise to conduct and provide oversight for its airtanker fleet. Contractors will provide most of the operational personnel, including pilots and maintenance personnel. The Coast Guard will continue to provide airworthiness support to the aircraft after they are transferred to the Forest Service.

Amodei Q7: Do airtanker contractors have assurances that Forest Service owned aircraft will be used within a proper rotation policy and not used first every time to the disadvantage of the contractors?

Answer: Yes. The Forest Service owned airtankers will be subject to the same rotation policy as the contracted airtankers. This policy is noted in the agency's annual letter to the Forest Service Regions, Stations, and Area, Federal partners, cooperators, and contractors.

Questions from Mr. Jenkins

Forest Health Management – Cooperative Lands

The Forest Service's proposed budget would decrease funding for the Forest Health Management – Cooperative Lands program by \$5 million. In West Virginia, invasive pests and invasive weeds such as the gypsy moth, sudden oak death, emerald ash bore, hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA) and others remain a top priority to prevent, suppress, and eradicate.

Jenkins Q1: How will the Forest Service avoid a reduction in services and priority work that needs to be completed to combat insects and disease on non-federal lands with the proposed reduction in the Forest Health program?

Answer: In an era of constrained budgets, we have to make difficult choices.

Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership

My staff and I have heard good things about the Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Forest Service in West Virginia.

Jenkins Q2: Can you comment on the long term goals, anticipated future investments, and potential return on these investments?

Answer: This is the second year of the Forest Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service (FS/NRCS) Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership program. The long-term goal is to restore landscapes regardless of land ownership, reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality and supply and improve habitat for at-risk species. We currently have 28 landscape-scale projects in 25 States addressing critical conservation issues in a wide range of ecosystems. To date the total Forest Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service investment has exceeded \$67 million in treatment activities.

Monongahela National Forest

As one of the few Easterners with substantial national forest acres in my district, I'm concerned about how the agency's restoration agenda applies in our forests, which need management as well. The Monongahela National Forest covers over 919,000 acres. Over 12% of the Forest is permanently set aside as wilderness.

Jenkins Q3: Can you describe how you are developing and implementing a restoration program on the Monongahela?

Answer: The Monongahela National Forest is working to accelerate the pace of restoration and generate forest products through active forest management in collaboration with a broad set of partners. The Forest is using the best available science as the foundation for sustainable forest

management at a landscape scale (across broad watersheds and multiple landownerships). The Forest's approach includes protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat and watershed health through a range of activities, including forest restoration, sustainable range management, invasive and native pest treatments, promoting forage and habitat for pollinators, and road and trail maintenance and restoration.

Jenkins Q4: Can you explain why the most recent forest plan monitoring report for the Monongahela NF was posted to the web in 2010? Why have you not posted reports for the last 4 fiscal years?

Answer: The Monongahela National Forest's website had limited functionality, which is scheduled to be corrected at the end of May 2015. After that date, the Forest will begin replacing out-of-date or missing items.

Northern Long Eared Bat

I've heard constituent concerns about the proposed listing of the Northern Long Eared Bat, and the potential for that listing to disrupt needed forest management on both public and private timberlands in West Virginia.

Jenkins Q5: How can you assure that the proposed 4(d) rule will allow timely and needed management to go forward?

Answer: The Forest Service does not anticipate the listing of the northern long-eared bat will result in any project delays or any additional conservation measures beyond those already existing in forest and grassland management plans. Further, the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted a review of ongoing Forest Service actions and determined that Forest Service actions are not likely to jeopardize the northern long-eared bat and additional restrictions have not been identified. Management actions are also not expected to be delayed since the northern long-eared bat rule specifically noted that active forest management provides a diversity of habitat needs for the northern long-eared bat.

Question from Ms. Pingree**International Forestry and Honduras**

One organization that was founded by Mainers who love their forests, is the organization Greenwood. As you know, Greenwood has been working with the Forest Service in helping to strengthen community forest management and build markets for legally and sustainably harvested forest products. Greenwood trains artisans to make high-quality wood products, adding value to forest resources and creating incentives to protect biodiversity. More than 45,000 acres of rainforest are under management /stewardship now of Greenwoods partners in Honduras. They state that they can foster self-sufficiency by promoting sustainable forest management, while also promoting the use of a wide-variety of wood grades and the introduction lesser-known species, thus creating an economic opportunity for these communities in the rainforest.

Honduras has been called the frontline of the agricultural frontier where old-growth forests are being invaded and converted to slash-and-burn agriculture at an alarming rate. Even more concerning is the fact that the area is also under enormous pressure from illegal gold mining, drug trafficking and gang violence. The continued support of the US Forest Service/International Programs has been absolutely instrumental in enabling Greenwood and their partners to help stem the tide, and provide more than \$1.25 million dollars through the sale of high-value wood products for community forestry cooperatives.

According to its founders, this is real enterprise, based on responsible forest management, providing precisely the kinds of jobs and opportunities that are so important in the global economy and for our neighbors in this hemisphere.

Pingree Q1: That is why I am concerned to see that the International Forestry budget is cut by 50% in your request. Given the extreme challenge that many of the programs face within the International forestry directorate, can you tell me how this budget cut of 50% will effect these programs. Your budget states that you will be able to maintain programs in climate change, invasive species and illegal logging, all of which I support. But it seems to me that it will be hard to maintain many of the programs that currently are working on global forest management with a 50 percent cut and I would hate to see the hard work of folks like Greenwood put in jeopardy because of this. What is the impact that this cut will have on these programs?

Answer: In an era of constrained budgets, we have to make difficult choices. However, at this time, no decisions have been made on which International Forestry projects would be decreased in FY 2016.

Questions from Mr. Kilmer

Collaborative Forest Landscapes

The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program was developed to encourage collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes.

Kilmer Q1: Can you describe some of the remaining challenges/obstacles to success and how can Congress help the agency overcome them?

Answer: One of the primary challenges facing Agency capacity to conduct restoration through the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and other authorities is the increasing costs of wildland firefighting and the ongoing need for the agency to transfer funds from other programs to cover its firefighting costs. The cost of fire management has grown from 13 percent of the agency's budget in the 1990s to over 50 percent in 2014. The FY 2016 President's Budget proposes a fiscally responsible funding strategy that considers catastrophic wildland fires as disasters, to be funded in part by budget authority provided through a wildfire suppression cap adjustment which is outside the discretionary appropriation of the agency. This strategy provides increased certainty in addressing growing fire suppression funding needs, better safeguards non-suppression programs from transfers that have diminished their effectiveness, and allows us to stabilize and invest in programs that will more effectively restore forested landscapes, treat forests for the increasing effects of climate change, and prepare communities in the wildland urban interface to manage for future wildfires. The proposed expansion of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration program to \$60 million in the FY 2016 President's Budget would also further the success of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration program and allow for the expansion to other landscapes.

Kilmer Q2: What criteria does the Forest Service use when determining where it intends to utilize CFLRP?

Answer:

The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Advisory Committee evaluates project proposals and makes recommendations to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to make selections. The committee evaluates proposals based on how well the projects fulfill the purposes of the authorizing legislation. Specifically, whether projects: encourage collaborative, science-based restoration; support ecological, economic, and social sustainability; leverage local, national, and private resources; facilitate the reduction of wildfire management costs; demonstrate varied approaches to achieve ecological and watershed health objectives, and; Use forest restoration byproducts to offset treatment costs.

Kilmer Q3: How can the agency further support smaller-scale collaborative efforts?

Answer: Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration is one of many tools that the Forest Service utilizes to strengthen and sustain landscapes and enhance work with partners and engage more people in forest restoration. Other restoration tools and programs include Stewardship

Contracting, Good Neighbor Authority, and the insect and disease provision in the 2014 Farm Bill that amends the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 to address qualifying insect and disease infestations on NFS lands, the USDA Forest Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership program, and the Integrated Resource Restoration Program. Continued support of these tools and programs helps further support smaller-scale collaborative efforts.

Integrated Resource Restoration

A number of stakeholders have expressed to me their concerns about the consolidated Integrated Resource Restoration line item. I have heard concerns about how some of the different line items have fared under this proposed consolidation. As you know, the Legacy Roads and Trails program was created specifically because funding for road and trails remediation was not being prioritized.

Kilmer Q4: How can we make sure that we continue to make progress supporting a sustainable road system that is safe and environmentally sound?

Answer: The Legacy Roads and Trails program has played an important role in the agency's overall restoration efforts by concentrating funds on the repair and maintenance of National Forest System roads and trails that are contributing to watershed degradation and through decommissioning roads and trails that are no longer needed. As proposed in the FY 2016 President's Budget, activities previously accomplished under the Legacy Roads and Trails program continue under the Integrated Resource Restoration program, including implementing the results of travel analyses conducted as part of the Travel Management Rule. The agency will be tracking implementation in the coming years to ensure that forests are making progress in moving toward the minimum road system identified in the Minimum Roads System analysis as part of the travel analysis conducted under Sub Part A of the Travel Management Rule.

Recreation Resources

I've heard concerns that federal land management agencies lack the resources they need to manage recreation resources and programs. As you know, tourism and recreational businesses are an important part of access to our forests and help drive local economies.

This lack of resources has reportedly led to delayed processing times of applications for outfitter-guide permits. As a result, small businesses and nonprofit organizations that are ready to take people out on public lands are unable to do so.

Kilmer Q5: Do federal land management agencies have the resources they need to meet the public demand for tourism and recreation on public lands?

Answer: The FY 2016 President's Budget supports providing meaningful recreational experiences on National Forest System lands through a combination of funding proposals

including \$263,942,000 for Recreation, Heritage and Wilderness programs, \$82,516,000 for Trails, \$71,695,000 for Facilities, and \$33,451,000 for Deferred Maintenance. An estimated \$66,625,000 of visitor and permit fees would be collected under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which is set to expire in 2016. With limited resources and increased visitation, the Forest Service is increasingly leveraging non-traditional and innovative means of funding and accomplishing priority work to support recreation through strengthened partnerships, increased volunteerism, and employing youth and veterans.

Designation by Prescription

My office has been made aware of recent guidance from the Forest Service related to the Farm Bill's authorization of Designation by Prescription (DxP) for timber sale contracts. I'm told that DxP has been used for Stewardship Contracts, allowing the agency to get more done at a lower cost with appropriate safeguards. It's my understanding that language in last year's Farm Bill extended the Designation by Prescription tool to timber sale contracts, but the agency's guidance severely restricts the authority.

Kilmer Q6: Why does the agency believe that it is appropriate to use DxP for stewardship projects, but not timber sale contracts? I would appreciate the opportunity to work with you to address this issue.

Answer: Prior to the 2014 Farm Bill, the Consolidated Appropriations Resolution, 2003 granted broad authority for the use of Designation by Prescription on stewardship contracts/agreements, but not to regular timber sales. The Forest Service is in the process of re-evaluating Designation by Prescription policies in light of the 2014 Farm Bill. As part of this evaluation, the Forest Service issued an internal letter summarizing current policies pertaining to the use of Designation by Prescription on standard timber sales because differences in contractual procedures between stewardship contracts and standard timber sales are significant. We will update our policies pertaining to the broader use of Designation by Prescription on standard timber sales as authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2015.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FISCAL YEAR 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

WITNESSES

DAN ASHE, DIRECTOR

CHRIS NOLIN, BUDGET OFFICER

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN CALVERT

Mr. CALVERT. Good morning. The committee will come to order.

Good morning and welcome to the subcommittee's hearing on the President's fiscal year 2016 budget for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I am pleased to welcome Dan Ashe, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service; and Chris Nolin, the Service's Budget Director.

The President's fiscal year 2016 budget proposal for Fish and Wildlife Service is roughly \$1.6 billion in current appropriations, which is \$136 million or 9 percent above the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. Included are proposals that the majority of Congress would likely support, such as a proposal to reduce the backlog of species that are recovered but not yet delisted. But current law requires discretionary spending to stay roughly in the level of fiscal year 2016, which makes a 9 percent increase for Fish and Wildlife Service simply unrealistic as present circumstances continue.

A level budget generally leaves little room for the types of change that the Service is proposing. However, proposals highlighting a delisting backlog are an opportunity for us to pause and consider whether existing funds are being spent on the highest priorities. For example, the issue last year with the longhorn beetle species in California has highlighted the fact that, while the Service may recommend that a species be delisted, years can go by before the Service can do the work necessary to propose a delisting, and even then only if a lawsuit forces them to do so. Furthermore, ESA mandates that such recommendations and proposals be based on outcomes of 5-year status reviews, which must be conducted for every listed species. The Service fails to meet this 5-year deadline for too many species.

Compounding the issue is the fact that some species get a status review and get recommended for delisting. Then 5 years goes by, and instead of proposing to delist, the Service conducts another status review. In their defense, the Service budget is currently structured to force the endangered species program to have to choose, for example, between spending limited funds to save a species from extinction or to delist one that has recovered.

Meanwhile, the majority of the Service budget is immune from such difficult ESA choices but hamstrung by competing mandates, as well as Administration priorities that are broadly authorized but

not mandated. But is it right to forgo what the law requires in order to pursue that which the law merely says is allowable? Is there room enough in the Service budget for both?

In light of the 2011 court settlement agreements and the recent surge of ESA listing considerations, and in light of the Service's proposal to consolidate its budget and do away with a specific line item for ESA recovery, I believe this subcommittee has an obligation to look more closely at the Service's ESA budget and to determine whether the Service is really equipped to handle the ESA's many mandates. If the Federal Government is not prepared to take on all of the responsibilities that come with an ESA listing decision, perhaps it should not be listing those species in the first place.

Director Ashe, from the ESA to sage grouse to the National Fish Hatchery System to wildlife trafficking, we have much to discuss. I look forward to your testimony and working with you in the days ahead to enact a responsible, though likely smaller, budget that balances so many competing priorities.

Now, before turning to my colleagues for their opening statements, I want to thank the Service for allowing Ms. Jackie Kilroy to detail to the subcommittee for a second consecutive year, thereby continuing the subcommittee's long tradition of Fish and Wildlife Service detailees that are second to none.

I think I know who wrote that.

Lastly, though he is not here, anybody named David Joyce, you know where his family comes from but it is his birthday today, both St. Patrick's Day and his birthday, so we will have to wish him a happy birthday when he walks in, to our colleague David Joyce.

Mr. CALVERT. And I am pleased to yield to our distinguished ranking member today. Ms. Pingree is going to fill in for Betty McCollum for her opening remarks.

OPENING REMARKS OF MS. PINGREE

Ms. PINGREE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And the ranking member has got a scheduling conflict but expects to be here soon so I am happy to deliver the opening remarks on behalf of her. And since I was born in Minnesota, I feel like I have a little entitlement to say, "yeah, sure, you betcha" or whatever.

So I want to welcome Director Ashe to the subcommittee this morning as we review the Fish and Wildlife Service budget request, which totals \$1.576 billion, an increase of \$136 million over the fiscal year 2015-enacted level. Adjusted for inflation, this request proposes to spend nearly the same amount on Fish and Wildlife programs that we were spending a decade ago. While the budget has stayed flat, clearly the Service's workload has increased dramatically.

Since 2011, the Fish and Wildlife Service has completed 167 listing determinations, but as of December, it still has a backlog of 609 petition findings. With this enormous workload, the Service will need additional fiscal resources to address the backlog.

The budget request aims to rebuild capacity and makes targeted increases to address some of the Service's most pressing challenges. One such challenge that the ranking member wanted me to men-

tion is the wildlife trafficking crisis. The United States is, as you know, one of the largest markets in the world for illegal wildlife products. The Fish and Wildlife Service is the country's dedicated law enforcement agency for fish and wildlife crime. However, there are currently less than 200 special agents in the service. That is the same level as the 1970s.

So I am happy to see that the budget includes a \$9 million investment for law enforcement and wildlife tracking activities. These funds will allow the Service to hire additional special agents and intelligence analysts to pursue traffickers and protect our natural resources.

The budget request also includes investments for combating of invasive species, supporting the National Wildlife Refuge System, and rebuilding the Service's Science program, which are all critical as well to the State of Maine. Each is important to helping the Service achieve its conservation mandate. I think overall this budget request is reasonable and will move the Fish and Wildlife Service towards meeting its commitment to preserve and protect our living natural resources.

With the House and Senate Budget Committees marking up their respective budget resolution this week, it is my hope that a spending deal can be reached that moves the nation forward and spares the American people another round of harmful sequestration cuts.

Director Ashe, thank you for the work you do and employees of the Fish and Wildlife Service do. We all look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I yield back.

Mr. CALVERT. The chairman of the full committee will be here shortly but for time let's just go ahead and invite Director Ashe to provide his oral testimony and then we will recognize the chairman after your testimony.

With that, Mr. Ashe, you are recognized.

OPENING REMARKS OF DIRECTOR ASHE

Mr. ASHE. Thank you, Chairman Calvert, Ms. Pingree, and members of the subcommittee. It is great to be here with you today. I think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service budget this year really is about priorities, and reflects our important priorities. I will share some of those with you.

I think, first of all, everything that we do in the Fish and Wildlife Service is underpinned by science. We are making important priority investments in scientific capacity. Across the Service, we are making investments in priority landscapes and species. And we are putting priority behind important and powerful partnerships for conservation on an epic scale.

In part of the American West, what people are calling the Sagebrush Sea, we talk a lot about the sage grouse but the discussion is really about the dominant ecological type in the West, that is the sagebrush steppe ecosystem. We have an epic partnership between the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and 11 range states. That partnership has produced additional partners down to the individual landowner, people like rancher Tom Strong

in Harney County, Oregon, who signed a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances with the Fish and Wildlife Service. He said, "What is good for the bird is good for the herd."

Those partnership did not just happen. They happened because we have field strength, people like Angela Sitz, a field biologist who went out and built a relationship with a rancher like Tom Strong. We built an epic partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Department of Agriculture that has delivered over \$400 million of investment to American agricultural producers to help them make their living and conserve the sage grouse at the same time. Are these results worth an additional investment of \$4 million which we are proposing in our budget? I think that it is, to have staff who can grow those kinds of partnerships.

In the Great Lakes, our partnership with the Corps of Engineers, the EPA, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture is keeping Asian carp out of the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi, Minnesota and Ohio Rivers. Is that worth an additional investment of \$2.4 million to protect that Great Lakes fishery resource? I think that it is.

In the Great Plains, we have a ground-breaking partnership with five range states that allowed us to list a species, the lesser prairie-chicken, but to fashion a plan that defers to the management of those five range states. Is it worth an additional investment in our field capacity to make those kind of partnerships happen and to ensure they are successful? I think that it is.

We have a partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to identify and grow sentinel landscapes on military bases. The first one was joint base Lewis-McChord in Washington State. We will see two additional sentinel landscapes announced this year. We are growing that partnership, helping the Defense Department meet their mission needs and the needs of our men and women in the armed forces while also conserving species. Is that effort worth an additional investment in our field capacity? I think that it is.

We are looking at the possibility that some of the world's most iconic species: elephant, rhinoceros, and tiger, will be extinct in our lifetimes, certainly our children's lifetimes. Is combating that decline worth an additional \$12 million investment in Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement capacity? I think that it is, to prevent that tragedy from unfolding.

In the aftermath of the deepwater we will be investing between \$10 billion Horizon Oil Spill, and \$20 billion in the restoration of the Gulf of Mexico. Is it worth a \$4 million investment for field capacity for the Fish and Wildlife Service so we can ensure that \$10 to \$20 billion is invested in a way that will produce broad benefits across America's great sea? I think that it is.

I think, Mr. Chairman, in California's Bay Delta and Central Valley we proved last year the power of smart scientific capacity. We had probably the worst drought that we have endured in a decade and yet we saw no pumping restrictions due to Delta smelt. That was largely due to an investment in science capacity that allowed us to understand better where the smelt are on any day and adjust pumping in a way to keep the smelt away from the pumps. If we can improve management with good science in that situation, we can do it just about anywhere. Is that investment in science

worth it when we are talking about millions of acre-feet of water moving to some of America's most important agricultural resources? I think that it is.

As you look at our budget proposal for this year, \$136 million, a 9 percent increase, I realize that is significant. I know the pressures you are under here. But, I think you understand the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service touches every part of the nation's \$16 trillion economy. And is it worth an investment of \$136 million to make sure that development projects move forward on time, and that we can deliver innovative, energetic thinking to some of the nation's most intractable environmental problems? I really think that it is.

And thank you for your time today.

[The statement of Dan Ashe follows:]

**STATEMENT OF
DAN ASHE, DIRECTOR, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, INTERIOR SUBCOMMITTEE,
REGARDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2016 BUDGET
March 17, 2015**

Good morning Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Fiscal Year 2016 budget request, and for the Subcommittee's continued support of the Service's work.

As Americans, we want to provide places where citizens of all ages can enjoy and appreciate the outdoors. We want future generations to be able to go hunting, fishing, biking, camping, boating and wildlife viewing. We want our children to inherit a sense of wonder and the sheer joy of being in the outdoors. We also want to preserve its other benefits to humans -- clean water, clean air, wetlands and native upland plants to help prevent erosion, and pollinators for our food supply.

At the same time we recognize life is about balance. We need the outdoors for relaxation and recreation, but we also need places to work and live, we need places to shop and to make the products that we depend on.

The Service recognizes the need for this balance and is actively pursuing conservation to foster and support the Nation's growing economy and human population. We proposed a budget that is strategically crafted to help us with this task.

We are investing in the conservation of our wildlife and habitat to provide those myriad health and economic benefits to U.S. communities. Investing in the next generation of Americans is also critical, so we are creating new ways to engage young audiences in outdoor experiences, both on wildlife refuges and partner lands. With 80 percent of the U.S. population currently residing in urban communities, helping urban dwellers rediscover the outdoors is a priority for the Service.

The President's Fiscal Year 2016 discretionary budget request supports \$1.6 billion in programs for the Service, an increase of \$130.7 million over the 2015 enacted

level to fund the agency's high-priority needs. The budget also contains an additional \$1.4 billion available under permanent appropriations, most of which will be provided directly to States for fish and wildlife restoration and conservation.

This budget invests in science-based conservation and restoration of our land, water, and native species on a landscape scale, considering the impacts of landscape-level changes like a changing climate; expansion and improvement of recreational opportunities — such as hunting, fishing and wildlife watching — for all Americans, including urban populations; increased efforts to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, which is an international crisis; and the operation and maintenance of our public lands.

America's Great Outdoors – This initiative, a Service priority, seeks to empower all Americans to share the benefits of the outdoors, and leave a healthy, vibrant outdoor legacy for generations to come. A critical component of America's Great Outdoors is the National Wildlife Refuge System, which offers rewarding and convenient outdoor adventures to an increasingly urban society. Funding for the operation and maintenance of the Refuge System is requested at \$508.2 million, an increase of \$34.0 million above the 2015 enacted level. Included in that increase is \$5.0 million for the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, which will extend opportunities to engage more urban youth and adults.

The budget also requests \$108.3 million for grant programs administered by the Service that support America's Great Outdoors goals. Programs such as the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants are an important source of funds for the conservation and improvement of a range of wildlife and the landscapes on which they depend.

Wildlife Trafficking – Wildlife trafficking has emerged as an international crisis, imperiling some of the world's most recognized and beloved species as well as global security. The poaching of African elephants and rhinos for ivory and horn stands at unprecedented levels, and illegal trade is undermining the conservation of scores of other species. The President is requesting an increase of \$4.0 million for the Service to combat expanding illegal wildlife trafficking and support conservation efforts on the ground in Africa and across the globe, an additional \$4.0 million to expand the Service's wildlife forensics capability to provide the evidence needed for investigating and prosecuting wildlife crimes, and an additional \$2.0 million for the African Elephant and the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Funds.

Ecological Services – The budget includes \$258.2 million to conserve, protect and enhance listed and at-risk wildlife and their habitats, an increase of \$32.3 million compared with the 2015 enacted level. The budget includes program increases of \$2.3 million for listing activities, \$10.4 million for consultation and planning activities including those supporting renewable energy development, and \$18.3 million to support species conservation and restoration actions. These increases include a \$4.0 million program increase to support conservation of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, which extends across 11 States in the intermountain West. Conservation of this vast area requires a collaborative effort unprecedented in geographic scope and magnitude. To achieve sustainable conservation success for this ecosystem, the Service identified priority needs for basic scientific expertise, technical assistance for on-the-ground support, and internal and external coordination and partnership building with western States, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and other partners.

Additionally, the budget request contains a \$4.0 million increase to ensure appropriate design and quick approval of important restoration projects the Federal government, States, counties, parishes, and other entities will be pursuing in the Gulf of Mexico States in the near future. The Gulf of Mexico Watershed spans 31 States and is critical to the health and vitality of our Nation’s natural and economic resources. The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill dramatically increased the urgency of the Service’s work in the Gulf region and our leadership responsibilities. Over the course of the next decade, billions of dollars in settlement funds, Clean Water Act penalties and Natural Resource Damage Assessment restitution will be directed toward projects to study and restore wildlife habitat in the Gulf of Mexico region. In addition to being in high demand for the technical assistance it can provide, the Service will be a key player in ensuring beneficial projects receive environmental clearances. By providing this additional funding, the Service will be better equipped to meet this demand, resulting in the realization of ecological and economic benefits to the Gulf States—and the Nation—sooner.

Fish and Aquatic Conservation – The budget request includes a total of \$147.5 million for Fish and Aquatic Conservation, a program increase of \$4.9 million from the 2015 enacted level. Within its fisheries program, the Service is requesting an additional \$1.0 million for fish passage improvements to help make human communities and natural resources more resilient to extreme weather events by restoring natural stream channels, which helps alleviate flood concerns. This partnership program also generates revenue and jobs for local communities. The Service is also requesting an additional \$2.4 million for efforts to control the

spread of invasive Asian carp. This budget maintains the funding increase provided to the National Fish Hatchery System by Congress in the 2015 appropriations bill, which will allow the Service to continue hatchery operations, working with States, Tribes and other partners and stakeholders to chart a financially sound course forward to conserve our Nation's fish and aquatic species.

Land Acquisition – The 2016 Federal Land Acquisition program builds on efforts started in 2011 to strategically invest in the highest priority conservation areas through better coordination among Department of the Interior agencies and the U.S. Forest Service. This budget includes \$164.8 million for Federal land acquisition, composed of \$58.5 million in current funding and \$106.3 million in proposed permanent funding. The budget provides an overall increase of \$117.2 million above the 2015 enacted level. An emphasis on the use of these funds is to work with willing landowners to secure public access to places to recreate, hunt and fish.

Powering Our Future – The Service continues to support the Administration's "all-of-the-above" energy strategy by engaging in early planning, thoughtful mitigation and the application of sound science not only for traditional sources of energy but also in the development of new, cleaner energy to help mitigate the causes of climate change. The budget proposes \$16.8 million, an increase of \$2.6 million, for environmental clearances and other activities associated with energy development.

Landscape Level Understanding – The budget request includes \$69.7 million, an increase of \$12.2 million above the 2015 enacted level, for landscape level science and conservation. Global and national conservation challenges such as development pressure, climate change, resource extraction, wildfire, drought, invasive species and changing ocean conditions require an unprecedented effort to better understand threats and inspire coordinated action to address them.

The President's request for the Service includes an important increase for Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, otherwise known as LCCs. The budget requests an increase of about \$8 million for LCCs and Adaptive Science over the fiscal year 2015 appropriation. LCCs are at their core voluntary, non-regulatory collaborations with States, Tribes, and others stakeholders. Together, we work at the large landscape scale, identify common priorities, invest in the science needed to make smart conservation decisions, and then work together to meet our shared goals. The growing commitment to the LCCs by our partners is demonstrated by

the formal participation of over 270 organizations on LCC committees and the increasing leveraging of resources.

Partners are now calling upon LCCs to take on larger roles. For example, LCCs are working with 15 Southeastern States to facilitate the development of a shared conservation vision. The effort is identifying the areas that are most important for wildlife in the Southeastern U.S., allowing all partners to coordinate conservation investments and leverage resources into the future. Similarly, at the request of Northeastern States, LCCs are knitting together multiple State wildlife action plans into a single regional conservation strategy. LCC investments are also prioritizing fish passage projects across the Great Lakes, ensuring native fish can move into historical spawning grounds while minimizing the likelihood invasive species expand their range. In addition, LCCs are working with partners in the West to understand the impacts of invasive species and fire management on wildlife and develop strategies to keep native wildlife healthy. Providing funding at the fiscal year 2016 request level will position LCCs to meet these conservation priorities and many others identified collaboratively with our partners.

Cooperative Recovery – Species recovery is another important Service priority addressed in this budget. For 2016, the President requests a total of \$10.7 million, an increase of \$4.8 million over the 2015 enacted level, for cooperative recovery. The focus will be on implementing recovery actions for species nearing delisting or reclassification from endangered to threatened, and actions that are urgently needed for critically endangered species.

Legislative Proposals

In addition to our funding requests, the Service is proposing three legislative changes to reduce costs and enhance State and Federal conservation programs. First, the Service is requesting authority similar to the National Park Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which would allow us to seek compensation from responsible parties who injure or destroy Refuge System or other Service resources. Today, when system resources are injured or destroyed, the costs of repair and restoration falls upon our appropriated budget for the affected refuge, often at the expense of other refuge programs. In 2013, refuges reported seven cases of arson and 2,300 vandalism offenses. Monetary losses from these cases totaled \$1.1 million dollars.

We are also supporting the extension of the authority that provides Pittman-Robertson fund interest to the North American Wetlands Conservation Act

(NAWCA). Unless the Act is amended, interest generated will return to the Wildlife Restoration Fund. Interest from the Pittman-Robertson fund is a critical source of income for NAWCA contributing to stabilizing waterfowl populations on the continent and enhancing hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation. Since 1994, the fund has generated \$348 million for NAWCA which our partners have matched by more than 2:1.

Last, we appreciate Congressional approval last year of the first increase to the cost of a Duck Stamp in many years, and request language that will provide stability to the purchasing power of the Federal Duck Stamp. We request limited authority for the Secretary of the Interior, with the approval of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, to increase the price of the Federal Duck Stamp, which will allow fees to keep up with inflation.

Conclusion

The actions we take today will have repercussions for generations of Americans to come. The native species and ecosystems of our planet support billions of people and help drive the world's economy. Despite the challenges we face, I am incredibly optimistic about the future. With the President's budget request we can help preserve the values Americans support, leave a legacy to our children and grandchildren, and sustain species and habitat. Thank you for your work on behalf of the American people, and for your support of the Fish and Wildlife Service. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Daniel M. Ashe

Daniel M. Ashe was confirmed on June 30, 2011 as the 16th Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the nation's principal Federal agency dedicated to the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats. His appointment by President Obama is the culmination of a lifetime spent within the Fish and Wildlife Service family.

Dan Ashe was born and spent his childhood in Atlanta, Georgia, where his father began his 37-year career with the Service. Much of Ashe's childhood was spent on national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries in the Southeast, where he learned to band birds, fish, hunt and, most importantly, simply enjoy the outdoors.

Prior to his appointment as Director, Ashe served as the Service's Deputy Director for Policy beginning in 2009, where he provided strategic program direction and developed policy and guidance to support and promote program development and fulfill the Service mission.

Ashe also served as the Science Advisor to the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Appointed to this position in March, 2003, he advised the Service Director and provided leadership on science policy and scientific applications to resource management. As Science Advisor, Ashe led an organizational renaissance for science and professionalism, leading the Service's efforts to respond to changes in the global climate system; shaping an agency agenda for change toward a science-driven, landscape conservation business model; defining an agency Code of Scientific and Professional Conduct; authoring new guidelines for scientific peer review and information quality; building state-of-the-art, electronic literature access for employees; and reinstituting internal scientific publication outlets. He was also responsible for leading efforts to build stronger relationships with the U.S. Geological Survey, and scientific professional societies.

From 1998 to 2003, Ashe served as the *Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System*, directing operation and management of the 150 million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, and the Service's land acquisition program. During his tenure as Chief, the Refuge System experienced an unprecedented and sustained period of budget increases for operations, maintenance, construction and land acquisition. The Refuge System also saw vastly expanded public visibility, and partner and community involvement. Ashe also led the Service's migratory bird management and North American wetlands conservation programs from 1998 to 2000, contributing to significant advances in both programs' impact and effectiveness.

From 1995 to 1998, Ashe served as the Fish and Wildlife Service's Assistant Director for External Affairs, where he directed the agency's programs in legislative, public, and Native American affairs, research coordination, and state grants-in-aid. During his tenure in this position, the Service restructured and broadened its communications programs and capacities, incorporating communications expertise into all of its program

areas and employee training. The agency implemented a forward vision for Congressional relations, which led to several groundbreaking legislative accomplishments, including enactment of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act.

From 1982 until 1995, Ashe was a Member of the Professional Staff of the former Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 13 years on Capitol Hill, Ashe served in several capacities, advising the Committee's Chairmen and Members on a wide range of environmental policy issues, including endangered species and biodiversity conservation, ocean and coastal resources protection, the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Marine Sanctuaries Program, the Clean Water Act, wetlands conservation, fisheries management and conservation, and offshore oil and gas development.

Ashe's journey to the Nation's Capital was made possible by the National Sea Grant College Program, in 1982, when he was awarded a National Sea Grant Congressional Fellowship.

Ashe earned a graduate degree in Marine Affairs from the University of Washington, where he studied under a fellowship from the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation. His Master's thesis, on estuarine wetland mitigation, was published in the Coastal Zone Management Journal, in 1982.

Ashe is very active in local civic affairs in Montgomery County, Maryland, where he and his family reside. He is an avid waterfowl hunter, angler and tennis player. Ashe's father, William (Bill) C. Ashe, also a career employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, retired in 1990, and now resides in Harvard, Massachusetts.

CHRISTINE L. NOLIN

Chris Nolin, as Chief of the Division of the Budget for the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), leads the national level effort to prepare, justify and execute the Service's \$2.8 billion annual budget. Chris has been with the Service for 15 years; she formerly held leadership positions in the Ecological Services Program.

Before her time with the Service, Chris worked for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), where she developed the President's budget for the Service and natural resource policy for the Executive Office of the President. She also served as the OMB examiner for the U.S. Forest Service.

Earlier in her career, Chris spent over ten years in state government, coordinating environmental issues for the central staff of the New York State Assembly, and handling environmental policy for the Lt. Governor of New York.

She is a graduate of Georgetown University Law Center, where she received a J.D. *magna cum laude*. She served on the Georgetown International Environmental Law Review.

She is married to Joe Tinkelman, a Managing Editor at BNA, Inc. and lives in Silver Spring, MD. She has two children: son Zack is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and daughter Naomi is a freshman at Boston University.

Mr. CALVERT. Well, I thank the gentleman for his testimony.

While we wait for—the full committee chairman will be here shortly, I am going to recognize Mr. Simpson first because he has an Energy and Water Committee hearing starting in a little while, so with that—

Mr. SIMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I am sorry I missed the first of your testimony. I am sorry I was a little bit late.

But, Director Ashe, welcome to the committee. It is good to see you again.

Mr. ASHE. Good to see you.

GRAY WOLVES

Mr. SIMPSON. Let me ask you a couple questions. I am going to submit for the record some questions on that pesky sage grouse and I suspect there will be other questions around the table and Mr. Amodei probably will have a few dealing with the sage chicken. Is that right? So I will submit mine relative to sage grouse for the record. Let me ask you, based upon the best scientific information available to the Fish and Wildlife Service, have wolves in Wyoming and the Great Lakes met their recovery goals and do the states have responsible management plans and should these wolves be delisted?

Mr. ASHE. Yes on all three points. The wolves in both Wyoming and the Great Lakes, are fully recovered. They have met their recovery objectives for many years. The states have been responsibly managing those wolves while delisted. We were very disappointed that courts saw it a different way. But, yes, wolves are recovered and we believe they no longer warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. SIMPSON. If the Appropriations Committee were to include language in the fiscal year 2016 appropriation bill to delist wolves in Wyoming and the Great Lakes, similar to what we did in 2011 for Idaho and Montana, would you oppose the language?

Mr. ASHE. I am not in the position to give you an administration position with regard to that type of legislation. I can just reiterate that I believe wolves are recovered. I believe they no longer warrant the protections of the Endangered Species Act. We have much higher priorities for our people and other species for which Endangered Species Act protection is necessary.

MONARCH BUTTERFLY

Mr. SIMPSON. Okay. Well, onto something else. Ms. Pingree brought up the monarch butterfly last time we had a hearing with the secretary I believe it was, and I do not know if you know it, but the monarch butterfly is the state insect in Idaho. On February 9, Fish and Wildlife Service held a press conference to announce two initiatives: One, they are entering into an MOU with the National Wildlife Federation on restoring monarch populations; the other was the announcement of a funding initiative with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation aimed at conservation projects. You were very complimentary of efforts in agriculture to be a part of the solution and also said multiple times that “effective weed control and agriculture is a good thing and that agriculture should not be made to be the enemy in this effort.” Do you still believe

that modern agriculture can be compatible with broad-based collaborative efforts in monarch habitat restoration, especially given the efforts already being announced in states like Iowa with the involvement of the agriculture stakeholders?

Mr. ASHE. I do, Congressman. I think it is pretty clear the plight of the monarch butterfly has been driven by the fact that we have become very good at controlling weeds. The singular life history requirement for the monarch butterfly is milkweed, which is largely absent from the Great Plains and the Midwest due to our efficiency in weed control.

But if we are going to grow corn and we are going to grow wheat and we are going to grow soybeans, we should do that as efficiently as possible so that we are using land to the best available purpose. We don't need to disrupt agriculture to make habitat for the monarch butterfly. We know how to make habitat and we know that the monarch butterfly will respond. We are trying to build a national and international effort to make that habitat. We can make habitat on national wildlife refuges, national parks, national forests, on state parks, on city parks, in backyards, and in schoolyards. Monarchs do not need big patches of habitat. They need lots of patches of habitat spread across the landscape.

And so our opportunity I think is to work with the agricultural community to put that habitat on the ground using utility corridors, using highway corridors, using every opportunity. What we are working for is to produce that kind of nationwide effort, and it is definitely worth it.

Mr. SIMPSON. Thank you. And thank you for the job you do. And thank you, Mr. Chairman, for yielding me the time.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Ms. Pingree.

Ms. PINGREE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for reminding us that Idaho has a vested interest in the monarch and I appreciate your concern about that and certainly it is a topic of great interest to me.

I would love to take up all my time discussing that but I have a more pressing issue to the State of Maine and so I hope the chair will indulge me to talk a little bit about a Maine-specific problem, and it is kind of a long question so bear with me.

SEA URCHINS AND CUCUMBERS

This is about a particular issue that you may well understand more about than I do, about the urchins and sea cucumbers that are harvested in Maine. I heard from the association last year which includes eight processors and shippers of these species that come from the Gulf of Maine. I am sure most of you do not know that urchins are imported from Canada to processors in Maine but they are also harvested in the Gulf of Maine. Once processed, virtually all of them go overseas, mainly to a very large consumer market in Asia.

So the industry has voiced their concerns to me and I have talked to them at length regarding the fact that their members are being required to give inspection agents 48 hours of notice of their shipment coming into port, obtain a federal import-export license, and pay fees. Just as great of a concern for them is that these

paper requirements are onerous but also the inspectors are generally causing delays in the shipment of what is a very perishable product which has about a 10-day shelf life from harvest out of the water to reaching someone's dinner table across the globe.

I am sure you know our office has reached out to the folks at your headquarters in the North Seas Regional FWS office, including Wendi Weber, who has just been great for us to work on a whole variety of issues, so thank you very much for her, that office and all of you.

But the problem our shippers are having seems to be centered in the New York inspection offices around a certain amount of inattentiveness and delays, so I have a few specific questions. I realize they probably will not all be resolved at this hearing but, for the sake of our fishermen and our processors, really want to get it out there.

Mr. ASHE. Okay.

Ms. PINGREE. First off, to me when I learned about the situation, the regulation itself seems a little arbitrary, so I want to know what the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Service is for these inspections, what is that you are actually looking for in the process of the inspections. Given that all of these products go through the customs process as well, what additional information are you trying to seek from the processors and the inspection? And believe me, I do understand the really important role you play in wildlife trafficking and so many other things and I do understand your main mission; I am just not quite sure how urchins have gotten caught in this.

There is a shellfish exemption that dates back to the 1970s so I am not sure what the particular risk of sea urchins are posing that makes them require an inspection before export where other edible marine species such as lobsters, clam, mussels, scallops, hagfish, and other species do not. They are treated differently from a lot of other shellfish.

There is a 48-hour-notice rule that requires the processors and distributors give the inspection agent at least 48 hours before they expect the shipment to arrive in New York. This is typical I guess for all live and perishable products inspected by Fish and Wildlife Service, not just urchins, but again, given the nature of how this happened, it is very difficult for the fishermen and other suppliers. The processors often do not know when the fishermen are going to have a harvest of urchins. They might have a good day. They go out independently. They are not all working at the same thing, so 48 hours sometimes means an arbitrary 2 days that cuts into the 2 days that they have.

We have heard from your agency again, which is very forthcoming and helpful to our office and willing to talk about this, that these live and perishable shipments were their first priority. We are told that such shipments are expedited and officers do overtime to ensure they are inspected and shipped out, but the actions do not seem to be matching that goal. We have heard stories from the processors of the product sitting in hot warehouses in New York for over 48 hours waiting for inspection. That is just unacceptable with a perishable seafood, so if part of the problem is delayed inspections, if that is something about resources, I would like to hear as

a subcommittee member what resources are missing from your ability to do this on a timely basis.

Another question I have is why is it the Fish and Wildlife Service only started inspecting the exports of these products in the past 2 years when the industry has existed for decades? If you are already severely short-staffed, how did this get added back in?

Here is my last part of the question: Your agency has now stated that the suppliers are accountable for fees based on when the inspector has sent a compliance letter to the processors and business. I understand that the suppliers need some accountability to make the inspection process work correctly. My problem is with the fact that the New York office has sent requests to a number of processors seeking their records back to 2012 or earlier and has indicated that there will be a requirement of retroactive payment and fees and penalties. I am curious about whether this investigation has been continued, and if not, what is the purpose of pursuing it if the processors are currently in compliance?

So as I said, it is a long and involved and engaged question, but it is very concerning to our fishermen, our processors, and the communities I represent. So there you go.

Mr. ASHE. I got that message.

Thank you. What I will do is offer to come up with my Chief of Law Enforcement, Bill Woody, and we can sit down and have a more detailed walk-through of this.

The bottom line is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service is responsible for inspection of all wildlife products that enter the United States. It is a fee-based system so this subcommittee does not appropriate funding for our wildlife inspectors at ports. It is a completely fee-based budgetary item.

I think oftentimes there is an obligation for people to comply, but they have not complied in the past because they are unaware of the regulations. Then they learn of their requirements and concerns come up. We have a very good track record of sitting down with industry, and being sympathetic to their needs. We work with fish shippers and coral shippers, so we are able to work with shippers who need a quick turn-around.

I have been in the Port of Los Angeles, for example and have seen coral shipments. Our people are inspecting them and the shipper is waiting right there. As soon as we are done, the shipper moves their product. These shipments are very perishable. Our people are very good at working with industries to make sure that things work for them. I think we can probably do that in this case.

We can sit down in your office with or without the industry and then work on the best way forward.

Ms. PINGREE. Well, I appreciate your assistance in that. I would be very happy to sit down with you.

I will just make one other point. I would love to talk with your law enforcement people and I think that would be very helpful but I would also like to be able to have a conversation with you about the exact understanding of why these shipments have to be inspected. Like I said, other shellfish are not and so it is curious to me that they have been somewhat singled out.

And secondly, I do understand your mandate on illegal trafficking and a whole variety of other things, but since these are also

inspected by the customs service, I am just not clear about the rationale for this extra stop. That is sort of more of a policy question or maybe a science question. And as they say in Maine, I have been a little bit "on a tear" on this and so I want to have a better understanding of exactly why we are doing it. You have got plenty of work on your plate; this is not an invasive species, it is not illegal trafficking. And, really, I do not want to indulge the——

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Ms. PINGREE [continuing]. Committee anymore. When I speak with you, I want to not just talk about law enforcement.

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Ms. PINGREE. I want to talk about rationale.

Mr. ASHE. Absolutely.

Ms. PINGREE. So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. I want to change the line of questioning here.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

As I mentioned in my opening statement about the delisting, down-listing, up-listing backlog, the Service is requesting a \$7.7 million increase for conservation restoration activities to address a backlog of species that have been identified for potential delisting and down-listing based upon 5-year reviews. How does the Service define the backlog of delistings and down-listings? For example, how much time has to pass before potential delisting or down-listing is considered backlog?

Mr. ASHE. We do not keep a register of the backlog of delisting or down-listing actions. The Endangered Species Act requires us to follow very strict deadlines for listing. So it is very clear what is on our list of candidate and petition species, because there is a public petition process.

Mr. CALVERT. How large is that list of backlogged species?

Mr. ASHE. We are currently working through our backlog of 251 candidate species. We have made decisions on 169 I think, and then we have petitions that come in on a regular basis. I will provide a response in the questions for the record, including a status of where we are on our listing and delisting.

I will say, Mr. Calvert, again, the law does not give us deadlines when it comes to the delisting of species and it would be difficult to do that because delisting depends on recovery so you have to first get to recovery. It is not like a petition on the listing side where we are petitioned and then we respond to the petition. The law gives us very specific timelines within which to deal with a listing petition. But we have been putting an emphasis on delisting. For example, we have a Cooperative Recovery Initiative, which has been very successful and recently produced the first delisting of a fish species due to recovery. By the end of this Administration, if we continue on this course, we will have delisted more species during this administration than all previous Administrations combined. And so we are making a——

Mr. CALVERT. Well, obviously that process has taken a number of years but——

Mr. ASHE. That is right. I am not——

Mr. CALVERT. In fiscal year 2016 in the budget we are talking about today, how many delistings or down-listings are we talking about here for this increase?

Mr. ASHE. In this budget?

Mr. CALVERT. In this budget.

Mr. ASHE. Well, we are working on 18 delisting actions in 2015 and expect we will be working on an additional 8 in 2016. Those are species like the Louisiana black bear, and Delmarva fox squirrel. Hopefully we will be proposing a delisting of the grizzly bear in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. We are actively working on those proposals, and it is our objective to have those done——

Mr. CALVERT. Well, how much of the \$7.7 million increase is going toward that backlog? All of it?

Mr. ASHE. All of it.

Mr. CALVERT. Okay.

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Chairman, would you yield for just a second?

Mr. CALVERT. Certainly.

Mr. ASHE. Gary Frazer, our Assistant Director for Ecological Services says that the \$7 million increase will support the work on these delisting proposals, plus it will allow us to do a better job of fulfilling our responsibilities with regard to 5-year status reviews. We will be investing in additional capacity to do 5-year status reviews, which are the foundation for additional delistings.

Mr. SIMPSON. Have we ever done a delisting in which there has not been a lawsuit filed against the delisting?

Mr. ASHE. Oh, sure. I will have to think about a recent example but I am not aware of any kind of lawsuits challenging the delisting of the American alligator. I do not believe we were subject to litigation on the bald eagle delisting. But delistings are sometimes controversial, but mostly not. We have not received any notice of intent to sue on the recent proposal for Oregon chub. I doubt that we will. Certainly higher profile species like wolves or grizzly bear tend to be more controversial.

Mr. CALVERT. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Kilmer.

Mr. KILMER. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for being with us.

I wanted to ask about the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which is a voluntary citizen- and community-based stewardship program for fish and wildlife conservation specifically on private land. Working with private landowners and with other stakeholders, the Fish and Wildlife Service has been able to support successful management of federal trust species and support habitat restoration projects. In Washington State, it has been very useful for the regional fisheries enhancement groups that are very, very important for salmon restoration, which is obviously of great importance to our area economically, culturally, and environmentally.

PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE AND THE BUDGET RESTRUCTURE

The President's budget proposed restructuring the budget for habitat conservation. I just wanted to get a better understanding of how that restructuring will affect the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program and the activities that it currently supports. And any thoughts on how we can ensure the success of that program?

Mr. ASHE. Yes, thank you. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program is one of our most significant advancements we have made in the last 20 years, a notion that we should be out working with private landowners on a voluntary, cooperative basis. The budget restructuring is not going to have any effect on the budget support for Partners. In fact, I would suspect that it will be a benefit to Partners because the budget restructuring is designed to provide us with more flexibility to use dollars where the priorities are. Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects just take a little bit of money. A \$5,000 investment to make available to the private landowner a refuge or a fish hatchery expert. I think the budget restructuring will give us the kind of flexibility we need to provide better support to our partners for Fish and Wildlife program.

Mr. KILMER. And any thoughts on how we can better support the success of that program?

Mr. ASHE. The Partners program has been important in encouraging partnership between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, for instance. We started what we call the Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative between us and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to work with farmers and ranchers on conservation on private lands. Encouragement from Congress and the committees will help make those efforts work and make them lasting. I think that support will be helpful because they are shared efforts between us and Agriculture.

The Sentinel Landscapes program I mentioned previously at Joint Base Lewis-McChord has involved our Partners for Fish and Wildlife program as well. We would appreciate your support of that program also.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

Mr. KILMER. You mentioned before we started that I met you at our wildlife refuge out at the Nisqually. I have heard some concerns about the length of time it takes for refuges to hire management and biologists and outreach personnel. Can you talk about any challenges the Service is facing in terms of filling out key positions in the workforce?

Mr. ASHE. Well, the big challenge for us is the funding to pay for positions. In the National Wildlife Refuge System we have lost over 500 positions since 2010. I have one refuge law enforcement officer, for the entire State of New Mexico. I have no public-use professionals at refuges in the entire State of Arizona.

We have critical staff shortages. The time required to fill positions is a function of the resources available to support those positions. Our budget request this year is for a \$34 million increase in the National Wildlife Refuge System. That will allow us to fill some key vacancies. The limiting factor in our hiring is just the dollars.

Mr. KILMER. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart.

Mr. STEWART. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Director, it is good to see you.

Before I begin, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate you mentioned it was our friend David Joyce's birthday today but I am hurt that you forgot it was my anniversary today.

Mr. CALVERT. Happy anniversary.

Mr. STEWART. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. That is worth celebrating.

Mr. AMODEI. It does not sound like he means it to you.

Mr. STEWART. Dan, it is good to see you. Thank you for the time we have spent together.

I was noticing on your resume your father served 37 years in the Service.

Mr. ASHE. He did.

Mr. STEWART. Is he still alive?

Mr. ASHE. He is.

Mr. STEWART. I am sure he is very proud to see you in the responsibilities that you have.

Mr. ASHE. I think he is. Thank you.

Mr. STEWART. So congratulations to both of you on that.

Mr. ASHE. Although he does tell me when I am doing things wrong.

Mr. STEWART. After 37 years I suppose you gather an opinion about certain things.

Mr. ASHE. Right. Yes.

Mr. STEWART. I will bet you can guess two things that I want to talk about.

Mr. ASHE. I can imagine.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. STEWART. I am sure. I will just mention briefly the sage grouse because it is something I mentioned so often.

We had a meeting that I appreciated with you and Neil Kornze in my office a couple weeks ago regarding that and some very specific concerns we have with some coal production that is going to be devastating if we cannot work out an area of compromise and protect 350 jobs in a part of my district. Three hundred and fifty jobs is like, you know, the equivalent of probably 10,000 jobs here in Washington, D.C. It is very important for us to find progress on that.

The second thing is, as I am sure you are aware—and I do not know how you maintain your awareness on all of these local issues, by the way, that all of us want to talk about, not so much big picture on budget but the things that matter to us in our district in our states.

But last November the U.S. District Court in Utah declared the Federal Government cannot extend ESA protections to the Utah prairie dog onto non-federal lands. We thought that was a victory for efforts that we had been working on for probably 20 years, and this has enormous economic impacts. And again, a rural part of my state, tens of millions of dollars had been spent already in trying to protect this Utah prairie dog at the same time while trying to open up economic development in a part of the country that does not have a lot of that and it is challenging for them.

It has already been announced that the Federal Government is in the process of appealing that decision. I do not know and I do

not know what the 10th Circuit will determine but it might end up at the Supreme Court even. But as you know, since then the state has been aggressive in working with local authorities and working with you and others in implementing a state plan that would protect the prairie dogs. I wonder if you would just comment on your reaction to the appealing of that decision and how we can protect the progress we have made while that decision is being appealed.

Mr. ASHE. Yes, I think there were some aspects of that decision that were certainly troubling to us, but it would be my hope that that will not get in the way of a solution. I think you have been very helpful. I hope you have found the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be helpful—

Mr. STEWART. And we have.

Mr. ASHE. [continuing]. In that regard, and I think that with your help and support we can make progress. I met last week with Greg Sheehan in Omaha. I think the State of Utah is being very helpful. I think there are solutions available to us on Utah prairie dog. Everybody seems to be moving towards those solutions, so I am optimistic.

Mr. Chairman, that is a good example of what we can do when resources are available. If we get the funding we are asking for, particularly for recovery, I think we can make a difference. I am optimistic that we can get there with the Utah prairie dog. Whether we appeal or do not appeal, we are continuing to work with the state, and it appears the state is continuing to work with us.

Mr. STEWART. Yes, and I think both of us have the same objectives and that is to make the appellate process irrelevant.

Mr. ASHE. Exactly.

Mr. STEWART. Let's find success regardless of what the courts may find, and I think both of us would be satisfied if we were able to do that.

And by the way, you have been helpful and we are grateful for that. I tell people all the time back home we have made more progress working with you in the last year than we made in 20 years previous, and I do not think that is an exaggeration.

Mr. ASHE. Credit should be given on both sides because I think your presence and involvement has made a difference at the local level. You obviously have the trust of those local governments and I think that has made all the difference in the world.

Mr. STEWART. Well, thank you. And I will be brief. There is one other issue I wanted to bring up. I will maybe save it for another time, but let me just end by saying we look forward to working with you on those issues. We hope we can find the same type of a consensus and the same type of a compromise on the sage grouse as well and I speak for many western, you know, political officials when I say that. It is deeply concerning for many of us.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. I thank the gentleman.

Next, Mr. Amodei.

Mr. AMODEI. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Dan, thanks. First, I would like to get your dad's phone number. If you can give that to me off the record.

Mr. ASHE. He will be happy to talk to you.

Mr. AMODEI. Okay, good. Maybe he will be.

SAGE-STEPPE HABITAT

I want to start by saying, you know, one of your regional southwest directors has called Nevada this ancient crossroads of the West. I think he is right. I think there is work to be done in the Great Basin when you look at the last 20 or 30 years. When people say we have lost habitat and it has been fragmented, I think that is true. So the objective here, at least from my perspective, is we need to fix some things that need fixing and so the objective is just to get the strongest possible and a broad factual foundation and then go forward to reverse the trend of losing between 6 and 7 million acres in my state to catastrophic wildland fire and replacing that with seas of not sage but cheatgrass and stuff like that.

So I want to make that clear that I do not think we are at cross purposes here and I want to thank you for the openness that your staff has extended to our office in basically trying to bore down to get to some of this.

So with that in mind, when the Secretary of Interior came out with her Secretarial Directive, it uses words like "unprecedented" and for the first time actually asks for budget resources to put on the ground regarding fuels management, restoration, stuff like that in the sagebrush steppe ecosystem. I agree with her. Do you agree?

Mr. ASHE. I do.

Mr. AMODEI. And I think that is important because when you talk about what are we doing to address this issue in the Great Basin and in this ancient country, well, those 11 states, I would think that would be a pretty significant factor for consideration when ultimately the decision on how are we going to go forward with this is made.

And when I look back at USGS's commitment of almost 3/4 of \$1 billion over the last X number of years that everybody is touting as, you know, working with private landowners, stuff like that, it is like, you know, there are resources floating around in one form or another or proposed for floating around which I think would go to answer a big question when we started this, which is where are the resources to the plans going? Do you think we have made good progress? I mean obviously it has got to be put in the budget for the secretarial order.

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Mr. AMODEI. But you look at those resources, that is a pretty significant amount when you talk about the West where we are not having to rebuild towns and things like that. It is all wildland-related, most of it, so I mean this is a big step in the right direction I think. Would you agree with that?

Mr. ASHE. It is an enormous step. Like you said, I use the word epic partnership. I do not mean that rhetorically. It is unprecedented. When you are in my profession you read people like Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson. Even then, they talked about cheatgrass and the fire invasive cycle. Aldo Leopold wrote about it in 1949. This is not something that has snuck up on us. It has been a perennial, long-standing problem. For the first time we are starting to see the outlines of a solution because this un-gamey little bird has made us focus.

The fire invasive cycle is the major threat in the Great Basin portion of the range. The secretary has been an exemplary leader, and Janice Schneider, the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals, also has been an exemplary leader. For the first time, we can begin to be optimistic that we are looking at solutions.

Mr. AMODEI. Great. And while we are talking about that science stuff, I was visited by the folks from the university system in Nevada, the agriculture department, who have a fairly extensive history in terms of rangeland health, biology, the range agriculture industry, all that stuff, and they indicated to me—and these are my words and I am shortening it up—but basically nobody has asked them for their thoughts on the health of the sagebrush, so all I would say is I would appreciate it if you would look at that.

Mr. ASHE. Sure.

Mr. AMODEI. Has anybody asked the folks who have been in the business for a heck of a long time, what their thoughts are on a cheatgrass, fire, and all that other sort of stuff? I do not know if that is true or not and I am not indicating I do not believe them, but it is like I would think when we talk about underpinned by science for your conclusions, it is like I would assume you would talk to the folks who have been doing that for quite a while.

Mr. ASHE. We have. I would take the occasion to again say that with this subcommittee's help, we have built science capacity within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and—

Mr. AMODEI. And I get that.

Mr. ASHE [continuing]. That has been helpful. We used some of that science capacity to contract with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies—

Mr. AMODEI. No, I understand that.

Mr. ASHE [continuing]. And they have produced—

Mr. AMODEI. I am not saying you should not have talked to anybody you talked to.

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Mr. AMODEI. I am just saying one of the preeminent folks who have been in the business for a long time probably ought to be at the table when you talk about that.

Let me switch real quick. Mining transparency, it is my understanding that there are presently discussions with Barrick and Newmont—we are not going to beat around the bush—

Mr. ASHE. Yes.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. Who happen to be major mining companies who own some pretty nice sage hen habitat ranges in Nevada, about potential takeover agreements or whatever the right phrase is, which is fine; I am okay with that. I mean that is your job, but I find it curious that those are going on and everybody acknowledges them and at the same time there is pushback to the Nevada sagebrush system eco-council in terms of a mitigation plan for the state.

And so I say that to say this, which is if it is okay to talk mitigation with certain private landowners, why would there be pushback to the state's mitigation plan in general? Because that is what I have been led to believe is that one of the problems with Nevada is you have got to make a mitigation plan there and that is problematic, which kind of gets us into, you know that 3 million acre

map that you said is not the map from your October letter, we are still working on Coates in Nevada, right?

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Mr. AMODEI. Coates is the map.

Mr. ASHE. Yes.

Mr. AMODEI. Okay, good. The record should reflect that that was an affirmative answer, Mr. Chairman.

So anyhow, I am glad you are talking to Barrick and Newmont.

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Mr. AMODEI. Is it your understanding that the discussion with the state for their mitigation plans is in good shape or is in bad shape? I know that Ren has been fairly critical at some public conferences about it and does not like the state plan for mitigation. Where are we at on that as far as you know presently?

Mr. ASHE. The discussions that we have had with Barrick pertain to a specific mitigation agreement. When a company like a Barrick asks for our endorsement of a mitigation agreement, they need to provide very specific terms and conditions related to that agreement. We have been involved in discussions for close to 2 years with Barrick on the formation of a mitigation agreement. We are pretty close to the endpoint there.

Mr. AMODEI. Why did you not want the ability to do that with somebody 2 years down the road maybe?

Mr. ASHE. We have been working with the State of Nevada on their plan. We do endorse the notion of education as a vital element of the sage grouse conservation strategy. Where we disagreed with the State of Nevada is whether that strategy could be a replacement for resource allocations in the BLM plan. If we are going to avoid the need to list the greater sage-grouse, we have to be able to see a specific, predictable outcome. We were not able to get to a place with the State of Nevada where we could say that your mitigation strategy is going to provide certain outcomes with regard to the sage-grouse to replace the need for resource allocations in the BLM plans. We are continuing to work with the state on their mitigation strategy.

Mr. AMODEI. And finally if I might, Mr. Chairman—and I will get with you offline on the other stuff—but when you talk about mitigation and restoration and whether the birds will come back in, that sort of stuff, I know there has been a differentiation recently, low altitude versus high altitude. And it is I guess curious to me. We asked USGS to make us a map up of Nevada that says, hey, where is Pinyon-Juniper, where are the major fires in the last 20 years, and where is cheatgrass? And they did it for us.

It bothers me that when we talk about low altitude or other concepts like that, when I go to staff and say how many acres in Nevada are low altitude, I mean if that is not restorable—although that is subject to argument, if that is not restorable, can we quantify that? And the answer is kind of no. And I say, well, would you not want to know? Because if you cannot quantify low altitude, then I assume multiple use is okay dokey, which I am not sure you want to go that far and I am not sure I would have if I was in your position. Can you tell me how many acres are low altitude that the Service thinks are not subject to restoration based on past prior history of that 6 to 7 million?

Mr. CALVERT. I will have to direct you to answer that and then we will move on to the next question. Thank you.

Mr. ASHE. I would have to respond to that in writing.

Mr. AMODEI. Okay. We will talk offline. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. Mr. Joyce, by the way, happy birthday and happy St. Patrick's Day, and obviously with a name like Joyce we discussed you must be 100 percent Irish.

Mr. JOYCE. Yes, I am and Patrick is my middle name because there were already enough Patrick Joyces in our family. My mother did not want people to be confused.

Mr. CALVERT. Right.

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you.

Director, thank you very much for being here today.

Mr. ASHE. Thank you.

MASS MARKING

Mr. JOYCE. I know you are familiar with the fish marking process. You certainly have been utilizing it in the Pacific Northwest. The goal in the Great Lakes, as I understand it, is also to clip and tag all trout and salmon stocked to better track federal and state investments in stocking programs. This project has received some funding, primarily through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program. Has the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service budgeted for mass marking in the Pacific Northwest and the Great Lakes?

Mr. ASHE. We are budgeted at current levels in both the Great Lakes and the Pacific Northwest.

Mr. JOYCE. Could you tell us what "current levels" means?

Mr. ASHE. Let me get back to you. We have an ongoing effort in the Great Lakes that is an integral part of our effort to restore the native lake trout. We are using that technology in our mobile labs in the Great Lakes but I cannot tell you exactly the exact nature of that effort. But our funding is at current levels in the 2016 proposal.

Mr. JOYCE. The fishing has been wonderful; do not get me wrong. I am a one-trick pony. I am all Great Lakes. He is all sage grouse.

Mr. CALVERT. We allow mule deer, too.

INVASIVE SPECIES STATE PLANS

Mr. JOYCE. In the 2016 budget you are requesting an increase of \$42,000 for the implementation of Aquatic Invasive Species State Plans, a key coordination aspect between the states and the Service in connection with your invasive species efforts. Given the importance of coordination with the states, will the noted increase support the regional panels, state implementation of approved Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plans, or other efforts?

Mr. ASHE. That is a very detailed question. What I will do is I will get you an answer for that for the record.

[The information follows:]

STATE INVASIVE SPECIES PLANS AND REGIONAL PANELS

The 2016 budget includes an increase of \$42,000 for implantation of State Invasive Species Plans and Regional Panels. The Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Species Prevention and Control Act (NANPCA) of 1990 as amended by the National

Invasive Species Act of 1996 authorized \$300,000 for the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) Regional Panels. Regional Panel funding was reduced by \$60,000 due to sequestration cuts in FY2013, and the ANSTF has identified the restoration of these cuts as essential for both its work and its Regional Panels. Accordingly, the entire increase will be directed towards Regional Panels to partially restore these cuts.

Mr. JOYCE. Well, I would have a second question if Ms. McCollum was here.

Mr. ASHE. I think overall I would say the premier investment we are making in our state partners is the \$11.3 million increase request for the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants. That is key capacity for our state partners to do what they call non-game management. I would point the committee in that direction. The key capacity for our state partners is in that \$11.3 million increase for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants.

The invasive species grants tend to be more project-focused. What are we going to do with zebra or quagga mussel? How are we going to make very targeted, specific investments in Asian carp?

Mr. JOYCE. My apologies to Congresswoman McCollum. I did not see you sitting there as I looked down the aisle. I apologize.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I will just speak briefly because I will have Mr. Israel go before me.

I think it would be beneficial for us to have a briefing about what is going on with Asian carp because there is a lot going on in my region. Fish and Wildlife are taking the lead on it, and touching bases and working with the Park Service, the University of Minnesota, the Army Corps, and everybody. There is a lot going on and I think it would be beneficial for us to get a briefing on this because this might be something that we model not only for invasive species but for endangered species in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASIAN CARP

Mr. JOYCE. Lastly, and I am glad you brought that up, invasive species include Asian carp which pose a significant threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem. While the Army Corps of Engineers wants to say that we are supposed to be happy that Asian carp are some 50 miles away allegedly, we are finding Asian carp eDNA throughout the basin. I noticed you requested a \$2.4 million increase for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Asian carp efforts. This would bring the level of your base appropriating for Asian carp management to a total of \$7.9 million?

Mr. ASHE. Correct.

Mr. JOYCE. Can you provide specific examples of what this requested funding increase would be used for?

Mr. ASHE. In short, field capacity. Those funds are going to go on the ground to do more survey work, using eDNA technology so that we can do the best job possible for early detection and that rapid response. That really is the key capacity for us if we are going to keep the Great Lakes safe, if we are going to keep Asian carp from spreading further in the Ohio River, Minnesota River Valley systems. And so in short that is field capacity.

Mr. JOYCE. Could you supply that information to the Army Corps of Engineers?

Mr. ASHE. Sure. Yes.

Mr. JOYCE. They came out with the GLMRIS report that included eight options to deal with the issue; one being do nothing, and it took them 7 years to do that, which is just not acceptable.

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Mr. JOYCE. The information that they are spewing out there now is, oh, they have got this issue in check is not acceptable either.

Mr. ASHE. I think it is remarkable how long we have kept Asian carp out of the Great Lakes. I will give credit to the Corps of Engineers and the whole partnership. U.S. EPA, and our state partners. Their work has been really remarkably successful.

Continuing success is going to require field capacity and increased investment in scientific capacity. eDNA is a bit of a revolution. We need to learn how to use it smarter and know, when we find evidence, what that evidence means. We need to invest more in early detection capacities so that if we do have an incident where we find carp in or near the Great Lakes, we can respond in real time. The incremental investment in this budget is going to provide some of that key capacity.

Mr. JOYCE. I appreciate the fact that you are a team player. That is what we are trying to get going with the GLRI.

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Mr. JOYCE. One part of the team needs to be brought up to speed with the rest of us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I send you back what little or no time I have left.

Mr. CALVERT. That is correct. Thank you.

Mr. Israel.

Mr. ISRAEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Director Ashe, thank you for joining us.

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

I have two questions, the first on wildlife trafficking. This is really a global threat and I think that there is agreement on both sides of the aisle as to the threat, though there may be some differences of opinion as to how we respond to that threat. We know that wildlife trafficking is generating revenues for the most nefarious activities and now could be a not insignificant source of revenues for terrorist organizations. The Office of Law Enforcement received \$66.7 million in fiscal year 2015. The President's request adds \$8.7 million. At the same time, you are actually cutting hours at John F. Kennedy International Airport for permitting. My question is what do you need in order to engage in a robust and effective response to wildlife trafficking?

Mr. ASHE. Well, you hit two of the key elements. We need more law enforcement officers. And this year for the first time since I have been Director, we are hiring a new class of special agent in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We have now put special agents in four embassies. We will soon have a fifth. We will have special agents in Bangkok; in Lima, Peru; in Tanzania; and in Botswana. Before the end of the year we will have a special agent in our embassy in Beijing. With the money that we are requesting in 2016 we will be able to do five or ten more. We will be able to put a special agent in a place like Indonesia, where Ambassador Robert Blake is desperate to have that law enforcement expertise.

And we certainly need more inspectors in our ports. As I said to Ms. Pingree before, that is a fee-based system. All of our wildlife inspectors are supported by fees. The solution there is to increase fees, which nobody likes either, so we have to manage that capacity as best we can. We have to work with the regulated industry to try to find a balance in terms of increased capacity without increasing the fee structure exponentially. We are having those discussions as well. But our request to you is for capacity and our increase request will support more agents.

It is also going to support a whole new generation of forensics capacity. We are building an intelligence-related computer forensics capacity located in Jacksonville, Florida.

Our increase will allow us to do the investigations that it takes to beat these traffickers. Right now, it is a low-risk, high-profit venture. We have to make it a higher-risk venture, which means we have to start going after the people who are making the money. We are pretty good at catching poachers but that is not going to do the job. We have to go after the people who are making the money, and to do that we have to have better intelligence capacity in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and our budget request supports that.

We have also just signed an agreement with Customs and Border Patrol that for the first time gives us access to their trade database. That will allow us to better target our law enforcement effort.

I think we are making important changes and we are enhancing our ability to enforce the laws and to do that in a way that does not disrupt important trade. We have to be able to enforce these laws but also allow trade to move. International trade is moving volumes that we have never seen before. It is going to move faster all the time so we have to be nimble as well.

Mr. ISRAEL. Well, I would appreciate—because I do not want to gobble up the time and I have one more question for you—

Mr. ASHE. All right.

Mr. ISRAEL [continuing]. A briefing from you or some of your team so that we can delve into some of the details of this, particularly what your capacity is and where it could grow, where your intel capabilities lie, and what kind of interagency coordination you have. Wildlife trafficking involves the Department of Treasury, it involves money laundering, it probably involves elements in the intel community, et cetera. So if you would come on up and—

Mr. ASHE. I would love to.

Mr. ISRAEL [continuing]. Brief me.

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

Okay. Quick other question. I love visiting our national parks. I always tell people I may not be the smartest Member of Congress, though the competition is not that stiff, but I love the history of our parks. And I was at the Grand Canyon, one of my favorite places on Earth, learning about the Civilian Conservation Corps, whose first project was Bright Angel Trail at the Grand Canyon, which was primarily an initiative to put World War I veterans back to work.

And I had suggested when I came back to the Administration that we need to modernize the Civilian Conservation Corps. We

have so many veterans, and this is the perfect kind of work for them to do: reclamation, building trails. They did nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan. They should be doing park-building in this country. And I learned that there is actually 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps. So if you could just very briefly tell us about that and what we can do to support it.

Mr. ASHE. Yes. Secretary Jewell has been a fierce advocate for the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, 21st Century CSC, which is built on the same principle as the CCC. We have great need in our national parks, our national wildlife refuges, and our national forests. We all have an extensive deferred maintenance backlog. We have the opportunity to achieve many objectives in the employment of veterans, employment of young people, and the engagement of a new generation. Our budget contains \$18.5 million for targeting the next generation of conservationists. That is reflective of the Secretary's priority on the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps. We are all, like you, fully invested in that idea.

The other request in our budget is \$5 million for what we are calling Urban Refuge Partnerships. We spend a lot of effort to try to get young people out into the outdoors but there is a whole segment of society that will likely never have that opportunity. We are bringing the outdoors to some of our great urban centers—places like Philadelphia, New Haven and New York.

Mr. ISRAEL. Thanks for throwing that in.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. And St. Paul.

Mr. ASHE. And St. Paul, yes. So we can bring the outdoors to these great urban centers and not just to the generation of young Americans who have the opportunity to get out into these great places but also we need to make sure we are reaching who would not have had that opportunity otherwise.

Mr. ISRAEL. So when you come up or somebody comes up to talk to me about wildlife trafficking, can you also have somebody come up and teach me more about this?

Mr. ASHE. Absolutely.

Mr. ISRAEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. McCollum.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. On that issue of wildlife trafficking, obviously ivory is probably at the top of the list and we need to come up with a solution that respects the legitimate antiques that are out there, musicians and their musical instruments that they have had for some time, and stopping obviously illegal trafficking of ivory, which as the gentleman was pointing out, Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations are using to fund their activities so it is something we need to tackle.

With that, Ms. McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Steve, I might join you when you have them up because I have a couple of follow-up questions on this. One of them is in regards to your international program. You request a bit of a bump-up and then 25 new hires for law enforcement activity. Are the 25 new hires including the embassy personnel you were just talking about?

Mr. ASHE. Yes.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. So are they funded out of the international portion of Fish and Wildlife or is that out of law enforcement?

Mr. ASHE. That is law enforcement.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. That is law enforcement.

Mr. ASHE. Yes.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Did you want to add something?

Mr. ASHE. We are going to hire 10 new intelligent analyst positions—that is the intelligence capacity that I referred to earlier—and 10 new special agents, and five new special agents for digital evidence and recovery, so that is computer forensics. So that is the detail.

Mr. CALVERT. Would the gentlelady yield?

That would be all appropriated funds, none of the—fee based funds?

Mr. ASHE. That is all appropriated funds.

Mr. CALVERT. All appropriated funds—

Mr. ASHE. Right. Yes.

Mr. CALVERT [continuing]. Not fee-based funds?

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Okay. So five are computer?

Mr. ASHE. Right.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. So they are stationed here in the U.S.?

Mr. ASHE. The digital evidence, they will be in the Jacksonville, Florida.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Okay.

Mr. ASHE. We are creating a digital evidence lab.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. And then the other 10 and 10, where are they located at?

Mr. ASHE. The 10 intelligence analyst positions are going to be spread between service regions and headquarters.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. So they are stateside?

Mr. ASHE. Right. And then the 10 new agents assigned to the service region will be both here in the U.S. and embassy-based.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Okay. I want to see how the breakdown on that works.

Mr. ASHE. Okay.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. But we can do that later.

What would be the rotation in the embassy?

Mr. ASHE. Good question.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Are you thinking a year, 2 years? Because it takes a while to develop relationships and contacts.

Mr. ASHE. Well, let me just say it would be several years. As you said, one of the big benefits is to put somebody on location so they can build those trust relationships with foreign governments in their law enforcement capacity. It definitely would be a multiyear assignment but let me find out if we have a specific term.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Do you currently charge any fees for inspection?

Mr. ASHE. Our inspection capacity is completely fee-based.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. So it is all fee-based?

Mr. ASHE. Yes.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. When is the last time you raised those?

Mr. ASHE. I will have to get back to you for the record but it probably would have been 2 years ago.

[The information follows:]

LAW ENFORCEMENT INSPECTION FEES

The last fee schedule for inspection fees for FWS law enforcement were published in 2008 and went into effect in January, 2009.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Two years ago. I would like that and what we got for that because I do not want to make the cost of doing things, prohibitively expensive to slow down or do anything to hurt our shipping industry. On the other hand, you have the cost of not catching this both for international security and terrorism reasons, as well as the cleanup costs for some of the animals that come over and then end up being part of the whole invasive species problem. Thinking of what has happened down in Florida and in other parts is very concerning because then it costs taxpayers a phenomenal amount of money to clean this up later.

Mr. ASHE. I have asked our people to look at the potential for further fee increases so that is certainly a discussion we can have. We are considering the potential for further fee increases. We have to balance that against the fact we are charging fees against people that are playing by the rules, and so we need to make sure that those are fair.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. I agree, and so you can get me the history on that, but the people who play by the rules wind up paying for the cleanup costs indirectly later on, too.

Mr. ASHE. Exactly right.

SERVICE SCIENCE

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Could you just briefly kind of tell us what is going on with your inquiries for \$10 million for Service sciences and what are some of the things that you would like to have happen? I mean that has been a cost that you have been asking for for a long time. You know, it keeps getting pushed back, pushed back, pushed back. What opportunities are we missing either to help with keeping things off the endangered species list, invasive species, or developing some better techniques at catching some of these illegal substances as they come across our borders?

Mr. ASHE. I said in my opening statement that we are a science-driven agency, so everything we do has to have that kind of fundamental competency in science. The committee has been supportive of our requests to build over science program since 2010. Science is a key capacity for us.

A good example right now is that scientists have identified an Asian fungus in salamanders that is fungus much like white nose syndrome in bats. It has been devastating amphibian populations in Europe. If that were to get into the United States, it would be devastating here because many of those species are on the verge of being listed as threatened or endangered. That would make it more complicated with water projects nationwide if we have more endangered amphibians and so we should be doing everything possible to keep it out of the United States. We are working with the pet trade to see how we can do that.

One of the key ingredients to keeping it out of the U.S. is can we find a process for early detection. If we had that we could prohibit imports unless they pass a screening process. We have to have the scientific resources to design such a screening process. Like zebra mussel or Asian carp, this could be an issue that costs

the American taxpayers billions of dollars if we do not stop it now. That investment in science capacity is a small increment that would allow us to have a large impact.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chair, just one final observation on science space. I had the opportunity to go out to USGS, to go out to their lab. They were working on a way in which they could—I am oversimplifying this—swab, apply something to wood so it would show the type of wood, possibly where it came from, and other things like that as we work to ban illegal logging. That traffic, is, as you know, harmful to our industry, harmful to countries, and an illegal trade.

So a lot of what you refer to as science space, is some of this going to be collaboration with USGS? Is there a dotted line between the two of you? Do you have dollars that work together? Do you coordinate on your projects?

Mr. ASHE. We do. USGS provides us with exceptional scientific support. They cannot provide us with everything that we need. The support we are asking for is for very applied, rapid science. We work with the USGS in the sage grouse context. The USGS is providing us with key science, as they did with polar bear, as they are with Asian carp. But our science needs are often quick turnaround, scientific capacity.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. I know there are a number of hearings going on, including one that I needed to be at for the National Guard. If there are any other questions? If not, I would ask that we all submit them for the record.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Ms. Pingree has some, I know.

Mr. CALVERT. And Ms. Pingree will have some. I know the chairman of the full committee has some about hatcheries in Kentucky and we love hatcheries, at least I do.

Mr. ASHE. I do, too.

Mr. CALVERT. And so we like fish, especially when they are fried with a little bit of butter and——

Ms. MCCOLLUM. We get the carp.

Mr. CALVERT. Carp, yes, if we could just get a taste for carp out there.

With that, thank you for coming today and we are adjourned.

Mr. ASHE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
March 17, 2015
Questions for the Record

Questions from Mr. Calvert

ESA: Delisting/Downlisting/Uplisting Backlog

The Service is requesting a \$7.7 million increase for Conservation and Restoration activities, a portion of which is to address the backlog of species that have been identified for potential delisting or downlisting based upon recent 5-year reviews.

Calvert Q1: How does the Service define the backlog of delistings and downlistings? For example, how much time has to pass before a potential delisting or downlisting is considered backlogged?

Answer: As of January 29, 2015, there were 53 species with completed 5-year reviews recommending downlisting or delisting that had not yet been acted on. This represents 3.6% of the domestic species listed under the ESA. There is no statutory or regulatory requirement or timeframe to complete a downlisting or delisting after a 5-year review is completed. While there is no specific time at which a 5-year review recommendation is considered a "backlog," the Service recognizes that most of its recommendations that have not yet been acted on are more than a couple years old and represent a significant workload for the Service.

Calvert Q2: How large is the backlog?

Answer: As of January 29, 2015, there were 53 species with completed 5-year reviews recommending downlisting or delisting that had not yet been acted on. This represents 3.6% of the domestic species listed under the ESA. The Service recognizes that most of its recommendations that have not yet been acted on are more than a couple years old and represent a significant workload for the Service.

Calvert Q3: How many potential delistings and downlistings has the Service budgeted for FY16, and what is the estimated cost?

Answer: The cost of an individual delisting or downlisting action varies considerably depending on how wide-spread the species is and how many threats need to be evaluated, among other factors. The pace at which delistings and downlistings occur is dependent largely on the resources available and complexity of the individual action. The Service estimates \$1 million would support an estimated 5-6 additional proposed rules for delisting and downlisting. During the period 2010-2014, the Service delisted 11 species and downlisted another seven species due to recovery. The Service currently has 22 delisting or downlisting actions scheduled for FY 2015- 2016, eight of which are final actions.

Calvert Q4: How much of the proposed \$7.7 million increase I mentioned earlier is to address the backlog?

Answer: The Service proposes to dedicate up to \$2 million of the proposed increase within the Conservation and Restoration subactivity for delisting or downlisting rulemakings in FY 2016 if the President's Request is fully funded. This funding would result in an estimated additional 10-12 delisting or downlisting rulemakings in FY 2016 and future years.

ESA: Status Reviews

The Endangered Species Act says that Secretary shall conduct, at least once every five years, a review of all species included on the list of threatened and endangered species and determine on the basis of such review whether any such species should be delisted, downlisted, or uplisted.

Calvert Q5: Is the Service meeting this ESA mandate?

Answer: Over 85 percent of domestic species listed more than five years ago have had at least one completed 5-year review. The Service currently has 5-year reviews for 349 species in process. This represents about 45 percent of the 774 domestic species that currently are due for a 5-year review. Almost 140 of the reviews that are in progress were initiated five or more years ago, indicating that while the regions and field offices are attempting to address the workload, they are finding it difficult to keep up and complete reviews in a timely manner.

Calvert Q6: On average, how many five year status reviews is the Service conducting?

Answer: The number of 5-year reviews completed each fiscal year is below.

Fiscal Year	Totals
FY09	179
FY10	174
FY11	167
FY12	146
FY13	125
FY14	91
Total reviews completed*	882

Calvert Q7: On average, how many five year status reviews does the Service need to do each year to meet the ESA mandate?

Answer: The Service would need to complete at least 260 status reviews annually in order to complete 5-year reviews for each currently-listed domestic species in a timely manner.

Calvert Q8: How many status reviews has the Service budgeted for fiscal year 2016, and what is the estimated cost?

Answer: The number of status reviews completed each year varies based on workload and priorities. Funding allocated at the regional level allows flexibility in order to address Service priorities in each region such as on-the-ground recovery and proactive landscape-level conservation, and to focus limited staff and funding on those activities that can accomplish the most conservation for the species in greatest need.

Calvert Q9: If congress appropriated additional funds above the FY16 request for status reviews, would the Service conduct additional reviews?

Answer: The FY 2016 President's Budget request provides additional resources to help the Service address the Service's highest priority work. The Service would follow any Congressional direction for the use of additional funds.

ESA: Budget Consolidation

The FWS request to consolidate budget line items and eliminate the recovery line item is a concern. Recovering and delisting species is something I think we can all agree is important. If anything, we ought to give it more visibility in the budget—not less.

Calvert Q10: Please explain the rationale for the proposed change.

Answer: The current Ecological Services budget structure no longer matches the Service's on-the-ground business model and impedes its ability to direct funding to the highest priorities. The proposed budget structure reflects the realignment of functions within Ecological Services approved last year to better support the field in providing more efficient and effective conservation delivery for species and habitat protection together. The proposed budget structure is primarily administrative in nature and will not require a reallocation of base operations and funding. Existing funding will continue to be allocated based on current workload distribution.

The proposed budget structure realigns funding within three subactivities and improves management efficiency and administrative accounting currently needed to support field office operations within eight subactivities. Grouping resources ensures timely decisions, expedited permit reviews, and supports successful partnerships and collaboration, which in turn, contribute to economic productivity and protection of trust resources.

Calvert Q11: Does the new structure allow for adequate transparency and accountability? Will you be able to report how funds are allocated with regard to recovery goals and work?

Answer: The Service's new structure will continue to allow for adequate transparency and accountability for recovery activities. The Service will also still provide the annual Federal and State Endangered and Threatened Species Expenditures Report, biannual Recovery Report to Congress and other measures of accomplishments in recovery planning, implementation, status reviews, and downlisting/delisting.

ESA: State and Tribal Wildlife Grants

Calvert Q12: Is the primary goal of the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program to save imperiled species before they have to be listed under the Endangered Species Act?

Answer: The primary goal of the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (STWG) program is to conserve, protect and restore "species of greatest conservation need" (SGCN), as identified by States and tribal governments in their State Wildlife Action Plans. States and tribes consider many factors in identifying SGCN, including cultural and socioeconomic factors. Many States and tribes do use STWG funds to help prevent the need to list imperiled species under the Endangered Species Act, but appropriations language pertaining to the STWG program does not specify that SGCN must be in imminent danger of listing. Species to which grantees allocate STWG funds include candidate or petitioned species, current ESA-listed species, secure but declining species, and those species about which insufficient data exists to adequately determine conservation status.

Calvert Q13: If so, is priority therefore given to candidate species and those proposed but not yet listed?

Answer: Many States and tribes do use STWG funds to help prevent the need to list imperiled species under the Endangered Species Act, but there is no requirement pertaining to the STWG program does not specify that SGCN must be in imminent danger of listing. Species to which grantees allocate STWG funds include candidate or petitioned species, current ESA-listed species, secure but declining species, and those species about which insufficient data exists to adequately determine conservation status.

Calvert Q14: If so, how does the Service ensure that these particular species are the priority?

Answer: The Service defers to the States and tribes on selecting SGCN. These species are identified in the State Wildlife Action Plans developed by the States, and approved by the Service, as required by law.

ESA: Sage-Grouse

Calvert Q15: Please provide the legal argument and the exact language of the 2011 court settlement agreements that led the Service to conclude that, notwithstanding the general provision in the fiscal year 2015 appropriation, the Service is mandated to announce a determination by September 30, 2015.

Answer: The exact language of the stipulated settlement agreement is, "...the Defendants shall submit a proposed rule or a not-warranted finding to the Federal Register for the following species no later than the end of the specified fiscal year: . . . greater sage-grouse, including any Distinct Population Segments (DPS), by FY 2015." The Service will comply with its obligation to the Court to reach a determination by the end of fiscal year 2015 as to whether a listing proposal is still warranted, or not warranted. Reaching a determination does not involve writing or issuing a proposed rule. If the Service finds that listing is still warranted, the rider language

and the Anti-Deficiency Act will prevent us from proceeding to write or issue a proposed listing rule, and the Service will not do so.

Consultation and Permitting

You spoke briefly in the hearing about “projects delivered on time,” presumably referring to a general goal of completing permitting and consultations in a timely manner.

Calvert Q16: Please clarify what you meant by that statement.

Answer: The Service supports a nationwide network of field offices that work with local governments, States, project proponents, Federal agencies, and the public to help design and build projects that avoid or minimize impacts to, or even help restore, fish and wildlife populations. Under numerous authorities including the Endangered Species Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and National Environmental Policy Act, when requested, the Service engages in project reviews on a formal basis, such as formal ESA consultations with other federal agencies. More often, the Service engages in less formal ways such as providing early technical assistance to project proponents to help them design projects that meet environmental standards, thus streamlining the review and permitting process. These activities demonstrate how, with adequate support for its field office network, the Service can help deliver important projects on time and facilitate the conservation of fish and wildlife resources.

Calvert Q17: Please describe the Service’s permitting and consultation mandates, individually for each mandate, and all associated performance measures. For each performance measure involving time, please provide a table with the FY15 estimate, the FY16 target, the estimated FY16 budget, and the FY16 FTE.

Answer: The Consultation and Restoration subactivity includes funding for working on HCPs and the Service cannot break the funds out by activity, so are unable to provide estimated FY 16 budget and FTE breakouts associated with each performance measure. In most years, the Service’s performance is relatively constant. Those consultations completed outside of timelines are most often due to the agency or applicant providing insufficient information or requesting an extension of the timeline, and/or insufficient Service staff to complete the consultation workload. The FY 2015 targets were significantly reduced in relation to 2014 because performance targets were set before the FY 2015 appropriation was enacted and the Service was anticipating enactment of a budget below the requested level. Decreases in budgets were also projected for other agencies, which impacted the number of requests for environmental reviews the Service anticipated receiving. The following is a summary of the Service’s permitting and consultation mandates and associated performance measures:

General section 7 mandate

ESA Section 7(a) (2) requires each Federal agency, in consultation with the Service, “to insure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out. . . is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of [critical] habitat. . . .”

Performance Goal CSF 7.31: Percent of formal/informal “other non-resource-use specific” consultations addressed in a timely manner.

The regulations require Federal agencies to consult with the Service if their actions “may affect” a listed species. After receipt of a biological assessment (a document prepared by an agency to support the consultation process for major construction activities), the Service has 30 days to respond as to whether or not they concur with the findings of the biological assessment. If the Service concurs with an agency’s determination that an action is not likely to adversely affect a species or its critical habitat, the agency’s duties under section 7 are fulfilled. If the agency’s action “may adversely affect” a listed species or critical habitat, the agency enters into formal consultation with the Service which concludes in 135 days with the Service providing the agency a biological opinion. However, formal consultations may require additional time due to project complexity or the number of listed species that may be adversely affected by the action.

In most years, the Service completed between 80-85% of other non-resource-use specific consultations within the set timelines, and thus in a “timely manner.” These are consultations on actions such as infrastructure development, housing, road construction, etc. Roughly 77% of the total consultations fall under this category. Consultations completed outside of timelines are most often due to the agency or applicant providing insufficient information or requesting to extend the timeline, and/or insufficient Service staff to complete the consultation workload.

Performance Goal	2011 Actual	2012 Actual	2013 Actual	2014 Actual	2015 Target	2016 PB	Change from 2015 Target to 2016 PB
CSF 7.31 - Percent of formal/informal “other non-resource-use specific” consultations addressed in a timely manner	85% (7,827 of 9,188)	84% (8,028 of 9,590)	85% (7,390 of 8,680)	83% (6,722 of 8,077)	76% (2,586 of 3,388)	78% (6,731 of 8,649)	2%
Comments:	Change in performance in FY16 is a result of the increase in funding for section 7 interagency consultations in the Gulf Coast and other areas.						

Other general mandates

There are other statutory mandates for coordination with the Service when major development projects are being planned. The Service effectively addresses these mandates by providing technical assistance to agencies or applicants early in project planning on ways to avoid and minimize the potential impacts of projects on species and habitats.

Performance Goal 4.7.5: % Percent of requests for technical assistance completed.

Service Field Offices help the public and Federal agencies avoid and minimize impacts to important species and habitats during project development or implementation. While technical assistance is not a stipulated mandate in the ESA or other legislation, it is essential to the

Service's efforts to assist the public in conserving fish and wildlife resources and in FY 2016 includes the Service's anticipated work on the Gulf Coast restoration.

Performance Goal	2011 Actual	2012 Actual	2013 Actual	2014 Actual	2015 Target	2016 PB	Change from 2015 Target to 2016 PB
4.7.5 - % of requests for technical assistance completed	90% (23,404 of 25,873)	92% (22,625 of 24,576)	90% (18,762 of 20,852)	92% (16,785 of 18,306)	85% (7,936 of 9,310)	86% (18,530 of 21,518)	1%
Comments:	Change in performance in FY16 is a result of the increase in technical assistance funding for environmental reviews of projects in the Gulf Coast and other areas.						

Performance Goal: 4.8.2 - # Number of large-scale landscape planning and/or programmatic approaches completed annually.

If an agency funds, permits, or otherwise conducts a type of activity at numerous locations across the landscape (e.g., dock construction), the Service may consider that type of activity programmatically or at a larger, landscape level. This approach requires additional time and resources, yet can increase efficiency and improve conservation outcomes. The Service's FY 2016 estimate includes anticipated work on Gulf Coast restoration.

Performance Goal	2011 Actual	2012 Actual	2013 Actual	2014 Actual	2015 Target	2016 PB	Change from 2015 Target to 2016 PB
4.8.2 - # of large-scale landscape planning and/or programmatic approaches completed - annual	485	417	315	183	91	274	183
Comments:	Change in performance in FY16 is a result of the increase in funding for large scale landscape planning in the Gulf Coast and other areas.						

Performance Goal: CSF 14.1 – Energy (NOT including hydropower): Percent of advanced planning coordination responses with early planning; and formal/informal biological consultations provided in a timely manner.

Energy development proposals vary considerably year to year, but consistently represent a significant portion of the Service's field office work. The energy industry depends on the Service's timely and accurate response to project proposals as early in the process as possible.

Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs)

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act) was passed into law on October 9, 1997. The Improvement Act mandated that the Service complete a CCP for every unit of the Refuge System within 15 years (by October 9, 2012). There were 551 units of the refuge system, including wetland management districts, at the time of the passage of the Act. Since then, Congress mandated that the Service also complete CCPs for three newly established field stations before the 2012 deadline. Thus, 554 field stations required completed CCPs by October 9, 2012. In addition, the Improvement Act requires that a CCP be developed for every new unit that is created (within 15 years of its creation) and that every CCP must be revised every 15 years (or more often if conditions warrant).

Calvert Q18: Has the Service ever been sued for not having a CCP as required by law? If so, has the Service won any of those cases?

Answer: Yes, a Federal Magistrate Judge issued a report and recommendation that the Service had failed to complete the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex CCP by the deadline. The Department of Justice is currently appealing (3-23-2015 Case No: 1:14-cv-00675-CL).

Calvert Q19: How many Refuge System units are required by law to have a CCP in FY16?

Answer: The Refuge System currently comprises 562 wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts for a total of 600 Refuge System units. CCPs are required for the 554 units contemplated in the Improvement Act and subsequent legislation. CCPs are also required for 23 units established between enactment of the Improvement Act in 1997 and 2001. The total number of units requiring CCPs by the end of FY 16 is 577.

Calvert Q20: How many Refuge System units will have a CCP by the end of FY16?

Answer: The Service will have completed 514 CCP's by the end of FY16.

Calvert Q21: What is the average cost of developing and publishing a CCP?

Answer: The cost estimate to develop and publish a CCP ranges from \$300,000-\$1,000,000, depending on the complexity and/or size of the unit.

Calvert Q22: How many CCPs should the Service be developing and publishing annually, on average, in order to comply with the law?

Answer: CCPs published currently include both new CCPs (first round CCPs) and revisions to existing CCPs. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 mandated that by October 9, 2012, the Service developed CCPs for the 554 units in existence in 1997. To date, CCPs have been completed for 500 of these units (90 percent). The Service's first priority is to complete CCPs for the remaining 54 units, and the Service is currently working to complete 14 of them by the end of FY 2016.

The Service is taking a new approach to develop a Landscape Conservation Design (LCD) with conservation partners through the Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) network before revising existing CCPs. Revised CCPs will consider refuge management as an important part of conservation across landscapes, requiring a greater understanding and incorporation of environmental change and urbanization drivers into the planning process. To the maximum extent practical, the Service intends to include all refuge system units within the same LCD geography under a single CCP. This new LCD requirement does not apply to the remaining 54 first round CCPs.

It is difficult to estimate a specific annual target number for revised CCPs because the schedule of LCD completions is determined cooperatively with the Service's conservation partners, through the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives network, based on shared priorities.

Calvert Q23: How many CCPs, on average, is the Service budgeting for in FY16?

Answer: The Service has requested \$2.7 million to support the development of CCPs in FY 2016. The cost to complete a CCP ranges from \$300,000 to \$1 million depending on the complexity and/or size of the unit. Consequently, it is difficult to identify an annual number of new CCPs that can be undertaken as costs tend to increase each year and the level and timing of appropriations are uncertain.

Maintenance Backlog: National Wildlife Refuge System

Calvert Q24: How large is the maintenance backlog of the national wildlife refuge system?

Answer: The deferred maintenance backlog for the National Wildlife Refuge System is \$1.28 billion as of the beginning of FY2015.

Calvert Q25: Is the backlog going up, down, or staying about the same in FY15 relative to FY14?

Answer: The Service expects the refuge maintenance backlog will be stable in FY2015. Since 2010, the Service has reduced the deferred maintenance backlog by approximately \$1.4 billion, primarily due to investments from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, using maintenance action teams, actively pursuing private and public partnerships, carefully prioritizing budgets, cost efficiencies, refined business practices, and disposing of unneeded assets.

Calvert Q26: How much is the Service proposing for refuge maintenance in FY16? At this funding level, will the maintenance backlog go up, down, or stay about the same, relative to FY15?

Answer: The FY 2016 refuge maintenance budget request is \$140 million, \$82 million of which is devoted to maintenance of constructed real property such as buildings, roads, water management structures, and visitor facilities. The remaining \$58 million within the maintenance

budget is devoted to maintenance and replacement of vehicles and equipment that are necessary to manage vegetative habitats, adjust water levels in managed impoundments, and control invasive species. The FY 2016 request includes a \$4 million increase for deferred maintenance projects. Failure to fund the requested \$4 million increase will result in growth in the deferred maintenance backlog over time.

Calvert Q27: How much funding is needed above the FY16 budget request in order to reduce the maintenance backlog relative to FY15?

Answer: The requested \$4 million increase in the FY 2016 President's Budget will allow the Service to continue to address critical deferred maintenance projects including repairing, rehabilitating, disposal and replacement of facilities.

Maintenance Backlog: National Fish Hatchery System

Calvert Q28: How large is the maintenance backlog of the national fish hatchery system?

Answer: The National Fish Hatchery System (NFHS) deferred maintenance (DM) backlog is calculated at the end of every fiscal year. At the end of FY 2014, the deferred maintenance backlog for the NFHS totaled \$174 million.

Calvert Q29: Is the backlog going up, down, or staying about the same in FY15 relative to FY14?

Answer: The backlog for FY 2015 will be calculated on October 1, 2015, at which time the Service will be able to make a comparison to FY 2014. However, the Service is seeing a decline in the deferred maintenance backlog based on a comparison at the end of FY 2013 when the deferred maintenance backlog for the NFHS totaled approximately \$177 million.

Calvert Q30: How much is the Service proposing for hatchery maintenance in FY16? At this funding level, will the maintenance backlog go up, down, or stay about the same, relative to FY15?

Answer: The Service has requested a total \$19.4 million in FY 2016 in maintenance for the NFHS, which includes a proposed \$2 million increase in deferred maintenance. The requested increase will help ensure the health and safety of the Service's employees and visitors, improve the condition of mission critical water management assets, and allow the Service to maintain NFHS capabilities for production of fish and other aquatic species.

Calvert Q31: How much funding is needed above the FY16 budget request in order to reduce the maintenance backlog relative to FY15?

Answer: The Service has requested a total of \$19.4 million in FY 2016 in maintenance for the NFHS. The request will support annual and deferred maintenance which are both needed to prevent the deferred maintenance backlog from rising. The requested funding will help ensure the health and safety of the Service's employees and visitors, improve the condition of mission

critical water management assets, and allow the Service to maintain NFHS capabilities for production of fish and other aquatic species.

National Fish Hatchery System

Congress has increased the National Fish Hatchery System budget in order to maintain status quo production programs and prevent the shifting of priorities from recreational fishing to endangered species. The explanatory statement accompanying the FY15 appropriation directs that, "Within 90 days of enactment of this Act, the Service shall publish an operations and maintenance plan for fiscal year 2015 for the National Fish Hatchery System that includes funding allocations by region, together with an explanation of the allocation methodology." This publication is necessary to determine whether status quo is being maintained.

Calvert Q32: Why is this publication overdue? What is the new ETA?

Answer: The Service appreciates the support Congress has shown for the National Fish Hatchery System and the funding increase provided in fiscal year 2015. The Service submitted the report to the Subcommittees on April 17, 2015.

The FY15 explanatory statement also states, "The Service is directed to publish fiscal year 2015 funding allocations and production targets for each facility of the National Fish Hatchery System before the end of the fiscal year and to submit estimates for fiscal year 2016 along with the President's budget request." The report is necessary to determine at a finer level of detail whether status quo is being maintained.

Calvert Q33: What is the ETA for the 2015 estimates?

Answer: The Service provides the Field Station List to Congress with each President's budget. That list contains actual and projected spending for all field offices, including fish hatcheries. Projected levels are based on actual levels from the prior year, and thus will not reflect the final 2015 distribution of funds by facility. The Service will update these estimates with actual funding allocations and production targets for each facility within the National Fish Hatchery System before the end of this fiscal year and provide the information to the Subcommittees.

Calvert Q34: What is the ETA for the 2016 estimates?

Answer: The Service provides the Field Station List to Congress with each President's budget. That list contains actual and projected spending for all field offices, including fish hatcheries. Projected 2016 levels were based on budgeted levels from the prior year, and thus will not reflect the final 2016 distribution of funds by facility. The Service will update FY 2016 projections based on the FY 2015 funding allocations for the National Fish Hatchery System before the end of this fiscal year and provide the information to the Subcommittees.

Calvert Q35: Will the Service include the estimates in future budget requests beginning with the 2017 request?

Answer: The Service will include estimates in the FY 2017 budget request. The Service provides the Field Station List to Congress with each President's budget. That list contains actual and projected spending for all field offices, including fish hatcheries. Projected levels are based on actual levels from the prior year.

The FY15 explanatory statement also states, "The Service is directed to submit as part of its annual budget request an estimate of its mitigation activities by facility, along with an estimate of sources of reimbursement funding by agency." Since these federal responsibilities are carried out at federal hatcheries, the House Appropriations Committee expects to see these estimates annually in the Fish and Wildlife Service's budget request beginning with the 2017 request. This information is necessary to determine whether the budgets proposed by the other Federal agencies are slipping, and by how much.

Calvert Q36: What is the ETA for the 2016 estimates?

Answer: The President's budget request for the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) reimbursement program is contained in the Corps' 2016 budget request, and is \$4.7 million. The Service's agreement with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) provides for a payment of approximately \$900,000 for this fiscal year. However, the Service receives additional reimbursements from the Corps, the Bureau of Reclamation and others. The Service is requesting information from each Region to provide a more complete picture of mitigation activities by facility, and an estimate of the source of mitigation reimbursement funds by agency. The Service will provide this information as soon as possible.

Calvert Q37: Will the Service include the estimates in future budget requests beginning with the 2017 request?

Answer: Yes, the Service will provide estimates of reimbursable funding as directed in the explanatory statement.

Wildlife Trafficking

The Service has been proposing and congress has been appropriating increases for the past several years to combat international wildlife trafficking.

Calvert Q38: Please tell us what you've been able to do with the additional funds.

Answer: The additional funds complemented existing Service funds to combat international wildlife trafficking. Examples of the types of activities these funds supported include:

- Providing financial support for campaigns to raise awareness and reduce demand in Africa and Asia, such as rhino-focused environmental education programs in and around Mkomazi National Park in northern Tanzania and tackling consumer demand for tigers, rhinos and other endangered wildlife in Vietnam. The Service also provided funding for WildAid to implement a targeted communications campaign to reduce the illegal wildlife smuggled into the United States via primary international airports and land border ports of entry.
- Providing financial support to non-governmental organizations working to improve prosecution and penalties for wildlife crimes in key elephant, rhino, tiger and great ape range states, transit countries, and consumer nations. Projects include assisting the government of Guinea to increase wildlife law enforcement capacity and saving Sumatran orangutans by improving and strengthening law enforcement.
- Providing financial support for conservation projects to prevent poaching and combat wildlife trafficking in range states, and reduce demand for illegal wildlife products in consumer countries. Such projects included Black rhino population monitoring and protection in North Luangwa National Park, Zambia; establishing trans-boundary cooperation on law enforcement and protected areas between Vietnam and Cambodia for Asian elephant and tiger conservation; and support for the protection of endangered species threatened by poaching and illegal trade in South and Central America.
- Assisting key countries with implementation of their National Ivory Action Plans. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Standing Committee called on countries identified as being significantly involved in the illegal ivory trade (either as consumer, transit, or source countries) to develop and implement National Ivory Action Plans (NIAPs). The United States played a key role in negotiating these mandates. By providing financial support and ensuring that commitments are met, the Service believes that it is making substantial progress in several key countries.
- Training African and Asian wildlife officers at the International Law Enforcement Academies in Botswana and Thailand; increasing the intelligence shared among law enforcement agencies with common missions; enhancing the targeting of illegal wildlife shipments; and initiating wildlife detector dog programs that support frontline wildlife inspectors and special agents.
- Engaging in wildlife trafficking issues throughout Southeast Asia through a Service special agent attaché stationed at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. The agent has supported not only U.S. based investigations, but also provided expertise to other U.S. Federal law enforcement agencies, a variety of foreign law enforcement agencies, and to training efforts. Working closely with the Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Bangkok, the attaché has briefed several other regional embassies on wildlife trafficking issues and is supporting their local efforts. The Service will expand this effort through the placement of additional international special agent attachés overseas in Botswana; Tanzania; Peru; and at an as yet undetermined

location in Asia, potentially China--a key player in much of the demand for illegal wildlife and wildlife products.

- Under the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, the Service has taken several steps to strengthen regulatory controls over import, export, and sale of African elephant ivory, rhino horn, and specimens of other protected species, and the Service is exploring additional ways to strengthen wildlife laws and regulations to better position the Service to address wildlife trafficking.

Calvert Q39: Please tell us what you propose to do with still additional funds proposed for FY16.

Answer: The Service will continue to support critical activities in the field to combat wildlife trafficking, with an emphasis on positioning law enforcement personnel at key sites throughout the world and working with a wide-range of partners to identify and address trafficking routes and illegal operations in producer countries.

To fight wildlife trafficking, the Service will hire intelligence analysts to increase its information analysis capability, create liaisons with Federal intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and address and pursue electronic illegal activities.

Additional special agents will be hired and assigned domestically and internationally to:

- Focus on illegal electronic commerce and enhance relationships with other Federal, State, local, and foreign government law enforcement agencies;
- Support the Digital Evidence and Recovery Computer Forensics lab in Jacksonville, Florida, to identify suspects and protect the integrity of cyber investigations;
- Address the shortfall of special agents needed to enforce the Nation's wildlife laws including the Lacey Act, perform ongoing investigations, and address concerns for officer safety.

Calvert Q40: How do you measure success? Are you succeeding?

Answer: Ultimately, the Service measures success of conservation actions by the change of a species population over time. Success is also measured by the extent to which a particular threat such as poaching is increasing or decreasing using standard measures such as PIKE (the proportion of illegally killed elephants). However, in the short term, it is not feasible to measure the impact of small grants, including those funded through this additional appropriation, on a specific wildlife population or reduction of a threat. Changes in populations of long-lived species such as elephants, rhinos and sea turtles, as well as the impacts of specific actions to mitigate threats to those species, require long-term monitoring. In these cases, the Service measures success by evaluating the implementation of a particular conservation activity such as increased patrolling man hours, new skills acquired through training, etc.

Calvert Q41: Please update us on your ivory policy, and describe whether and how you've accommodated the many concerns of law abiding people from musicians to firearm owners?

Answer: The Service issued Director's Order 210 in February 2014, which re-affirmed enforcement of the African Elephant Conservation Act moratorium and addressed how the Service would enforce the Endangered Species Act (ESA) antiques provision. Following the issuance of Director's Order 210 on February 25, the Service met with a wide array of stakeholders, including individuals and groups representing antiques dealers, auction houses, musical instrument makers, museums, and orchestras. As a result of these constructive meetings, the Service revised the Director's Order to address several of their concerns, allowing a broader class of noncommercial items to be imported into the United States and clarifying how the Service intends to enforce the ESA antiques provision, while still maintaining the Service's goal of ensuring that the United States is not contributing to poaching of elephants and illegal trade in ivory.

The Service also improved its ability to protect elephants, rhinos, and other Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)-listed wildlife by publishing a final rule in June 2014 revising the Service's CITES regulations, including "use after import" provisions that limit sale of CITES-listed wildlife within the United States. The result of this rule is that items, such as elephant ivory, imported for noncommercial purposes may not subsequently be sold within the United States.

The Service is currently working on a proposed rule, which will be made available for public comment, to revise the ESA special rule for the African elephant. This proposed rule will include proposed limitations on the interstate sale of African elephant ivory. As part of this rulemaking effort, the Service also intends to propose specific exceptions for activities and items that the Service does not believe are contributing to the ongoing poaching crisis. The Service has taken into account the range of views expressed by stakeholders following issuance of Director's Order 210.

Many of the changes proposed in Directors Order 210 will affect people who are already trying to follow the rules.

Calvert Q42: How has the workload on ESA Permitting changed since Director's Order 210?

Answer: There has been no significant increase or decrease in the number of applications received associated with ESA permitting since issuance of Director's Order 210. The Service has increased outreach efforts to help explain the details of the Director's Order and how it may impact the public.

Calvert Q43: How has the permitting process changed for applicants since Director's Order 210? Is it taking longer for permits to be processed, and if so, how much longer? Has the number of applications significantly increased or decreased?

Answer: Since issuance of Director's Order 210, there has been no significant change in the number of permit applications received nor has permit processing time changed. The Service have issued over 60 CITES musical instrument certificates since these documents were

developed in 2014 for frequent, cross-border movement of musical instruments containing CITES-listed species.

Calvert Q44: Where in the budget can we learn about the resources that are dedicated to answering questions, addressing concerns and/or issuing permits for ivory and/or other ESA permitting issues affected by Director's Order 210?

Answer: This function is funded within the International Wildlife Trade subactivity under the International Affairs Program within the Resource Management Appropriation as well as through permit fees. The program also implements international treaties, such as the CITES, the Western Hemisphere Convention, the Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee, the international provisions of the Endangered Species Act and other laws. The Law Enforcement program also responds to questions in their capacity of enforcing wildlife laws.

Land Acquisition and County Payments

Calvert Q45: How many counties would be impacted by the Service's FY16 proposal to cut county payments by \$13 million, and in which States are these counties located?

Answer: In 2014, the most recent year for which data is available, the Service made payments to over 1,000 municipalities across 53 States and territories from the Revenue Sharing program. All counties where the Service has responsibility to manage fee lands would be impacted with the reduction. Existing funds that are collected from revenue-generating activities on refuge lands are distributed on a pro-rata basis to all counties in which a National Wildlife Refuge is located.

Calvert Q46: Has the Service consulted with those counties about its FY16 proposal?

Answer: The Service has not consulted with the counties.

Calvert Q47: What message is the Service trying to send to counties when it proposes to acquire more land but end payments in lieu of the taxes that counties would otherwise be able to levy?

Answer: The payments to counties under the National Wildlife Refuge Fund's Revenue Sharing program are very small, in most cases less than \$100,000 per year. However, economic activity brought to the county by the presence of refuges normally exceeds that by a factor of ten as detailed in the Service's *Banking on Nature Report* published in 2013. For example, the payment to counties for Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia and Florida, is more than \$535,000, yet visitors to the refuge generate more than \$17 million in economic activity per year. At a refuge that gets fewer visitors like Salton Sea NWR in California, payments to the county are about \$25,000 per year and visitors generate about \$1.5 million per year.

National Wildlife Refuges had approximately 47.5 million visitors in 2013. Hunters, birdwatchers, beach goers and others who spend time on refuges also inject money into local economies when they stay in local lodges, eat at local restaurants, and shop in local stores.

Recreational spending generates millions of dollars in tax revenue at the local, county, State and Federal levels. According to the Service's *Banking on Nature Report* published in 2013, the Refuge System generated \$2.5 billion of sales in regional economies, supported 37,000 jobs, generated \$342.9 million in tax revenue at the local, county, State and Federal levels for a total economic contribution of \$4.5 billion.

Not only do Service lands contribute to local economies, they also improve local land values. According to the study *Amenity Values of Proximity to National Wildlife Refuges* prepared by the Center for Environmental and Resource Economic Policy at North Carolina State University in April 2012, property values surrounding refuges tend to be higher than equivalent properties elsewhere. Most importantly, in an increasingly urban world, these sanctuaries of natural beauty offer Americans priceless opportunities to connect with nature.

Calvert Q48: Visitation of the national parks is nearly four times more than that of the refuge system. If the President is proposing that county payments in lieu of taxes on national park land should continue to be fully funded in FY16 through a reauthorization of PILT, why should an exception be made for payments for acquired refuge lands?

Answer: The Payment in Lieu of Taxes and the Revenue Sharing program are different programs. Revenue Sharing payments are made to the local governments that have fee title Service lands within their boundaries. The PILT program is intended to compensate counties for lost tax revenues. The purpose of Revenue Sharing is to share revenues derived from refuge lands with local governments. Economic use activities such as grazing, haying, trapping, and timber harvesting on refuge lands generate \$5 million to \$8 million in receipts per year since FY 2010. Counties receive a far greater financial benefit from the estimated \$5 billion in economic activity generated for local communities by wildlife refuges, as estimated by the Service's Division of Economics using the latest visitation numbers and analysis methods in the *2013 Banking on Nature Report*.

Calvert Q49: In addition to the land acquisition account, what other sources of funding can the Service use for land acquisition? What is the estimated budget in FY16 for these other sources of land acquisition funds?

Answer: In addition to acquiring land with the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Service acquires land using the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF), which is a permanent appropriation. The MBCF is a receipt account that primarily derives its proceeds from the sale of the Migratory Bird Conservation and Hunting Stamp (the Duck Stamp) and import duties collected on arms and ammunition. It is estimated that in 2016 the MBCF should collect approximately \$60 million. The exact amount may fluctuate depending on actual receipts. These funds are used exclusively to acquire migratory waterfowl habitat.

Calvert Q50: The Subcommittee has expressed its concerns during the past two budget cycles about refuge expansion proposals that lack county support. What changes has the Service made, if any, in response to the Subcommittee's concerns?

Answer: Conserving wildlife through land protection is an adaptive, public, and voluntary process, founded on the best scientific processes and data available. The Service does not create nor expand refuges without substantial local support. The Service wants to be a source of pride for the communities where they are located.

The process for establishing a refuge involves many opportunities for public input. Once a conservation need is identified, either by Service staff, or by a proposal from the community, a preliminary proposal is submitted to the Service's Director for approval to develop a detailed Land Protection Plan. Development of a Land Protection Plan is a public planning process, during which the Service reaches out to State agencies, local communities, Congressional offices, and conservation and sports groups to inform and help shape the plan. The Service coordinates with Congressional delegations and holds public hearings. Once completed, the Land Protection Plan is submitted to the Director for review and approval as a new refuge. It is important to note that not all preliminary proposals and Land Protection Plans are approved, and that the Service does not approve plans without community support.

Once the plan is approved, a refuge has an authorized acquisition boundary. This authorizes the Service to purchase fee title or conservation easements within that boundary from willing sellers. Such purchases are subject to available funds and overall Service acquisition priorities.

Reprogramming Guidelines

Calvert Q51: To the best of your knowledge, has the Service violated this subcommittee's reprogramming guidelines within the past five years?

Answer: To the best of our knowledge, the Service has not violated the subcommittee's reprogramming guidelines within the past five years. The Service supports and adheres to the Committee's reprogramming guidelines and reports all internal and congressionally approved reprogrammings to the Committee through the Department's quarterly reports.

National Ocean Policy

Under the July 2010 National Ocean Policy Executive Order, USFWS officials have been participating in the policy's marine planning initiative in regions covering Alaska, the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, Pacific Islands, South Atlantic, and West Coast. In addition, USFWS' FY 2016 budget justification states that the Coastal Program "is the Service-lead for coordinating with the Department on implementation of the National Ocean Policy."

Calvert Q52: Please describe in detail USFWS' planned and completed activities with regard to National Ocean Policy implementation.

Answer: The Service has participated in the Mid-Atlantic Regional Marine Planning Body, Inter-jurisdictional Workgroup to a limited extent. This role has included participation in conference calls regarding facilities and authorities, responding to information requests, and

facilitating a request from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Marine Planning Body staff for a meeting with Service staff from the Northeast Region, which includes the Mid-Atlantic States.

As to the marine planning effort, language adopted by the July 2010 National Ocean Policy Executive Order stated that the policy's marine planning effort will require "significant initial investment of both human and financial resources," and in early 2012 the National Ocean Council noted that federal agencies had been asked to provide information about how "existing resources [can] be repurposed for greater efficiency and effectiveness" in furtherance of the National Ocean Policy.

Calvert Q53: Please describe in detail any USFWS resources and personnel that have been or will be directed toward activities in support of the National Ocean Policy, including the marine planning initiative. In doing so, please provide a citation(s) to the FY 2016 budget request line item(s) that would be used to support USFWS' continued participation in National Ocean Policy activities.

Answer: The Service has no planned activities related to the National Ocean Policy that would require support by an FY 2016 budget line item. However, the Service's Resource Management account would likely fund any meeting attendance or technical support activities that might occur.

Calvert Q54: Given the requirements under the National Ocean Policy Executive Order, please explain in detail how USFWS plans to implement the National Ocean Policy in its future regulatory actions. In doing so, please explain (1) whether, and if so how, USFWS commits to only conduct operations and activities that are consistent with marine plans; and (2) under what if any conditions USFWS would be able to take an action that is inconsistent with a marine plan.

Answer: The Introduction of the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan states, "The Policy does not create new regulations, supersede current regulations, or modify any agency's established mission, jurisdiction, or authority." The Service has no reason to believe that implementation of the National Ocean Policy will have any impact on the agency's regulatory authority. Furthermore, no regional marine plans have been completed.

Calvert Q55: What if any commitment can you make that USFWS will not establish any regulations or restrict any ocean uses or activities in furtherance of the National Ocean Policy?

Answer: Any action the Service might take in furtherance of the National Ocean Policy would have to be consistent with the Service's existing authorities.

Challenge Cost Share

The FY15 Request asked for \$2 million for the Challenge Cost Share and the FY16 Request asks for \$10 million.

Calvert Q56: What interest have you received that indicates support will reach \$10 million?

Answer: The 2016 President's Budget requests \$10 million for Challenge Cost Share to support projects that can proactively reduce the risks that natural disasters pose to natural resources, and thus, reduce risks to the public's ability to enjoy and experience these resources. From FY 2005 through FY 2014, the National Wildlife Refuge System sustained more than \$472 million in storm and other natural disaster damages over and above the \$318 million in Emergency Supplemental funding appropriated by Congress. These damages include impacts to bridges, roads, water management infrastructure, trails, boardwalks, observation platforms and other visitor facilities. The Service has identified a large backlog of needs for this funding, and many projects are shovel-ready and can be quickly completed were funding available. These funds will be used to address this backlog, through projects that leverage the Service's habitat restoration expertise to address the impacts of these natural disasters. The Service has multiple Friends groups and other partners who are willing and able to leverage this funding to address small-scale projects that will improve the resilience of natural resources, as well as improve habitat or manage wildlife populations.

Calvert Q57: The request notes that the leveraged partnership would target projects "to address community and ecosystem resiliency in light of changing conditions". Has there been any interest or efforts to target projects based on the Secretary's AGO or Youth initiatives?

Answer: The 2016 Budget supports AGO and youth initiatives through the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, which supports the Secretary's initiative "Engaging the Next Generation" by actively engaging young people in connecting with, protecting, and enhancing natural resources. The Budget's proposed \$10 million for the Challenge Cost Share Program would contribute to all of these initiatives by incorporating an educational component and engaging youth in project implementation, like planting, facility construction, and trail building. With 80 percent of the U.S. population currently residing in urban communities, reaching out to urban populations to provide opportunities to rediscover the outdoors is a priority for the Service. There are currently 101 refuges within 25 miles of 250,000 or more people, providing an opportunity for the Service to engage urban communities immediately surrounding existing refuges. Young adults and children everywhere have different perceptions, values and relationships with land and wildlife compared to previous generations. Through the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, the Service is creating opportunities for youth and other urban residents to understand and connect with nature and the outdoors, and help ensure future generations realize the value of natural systems and the Nation's natural resources.

LCCs

Calvert Q58: What percentage of LCC funding goes towards Salaries and Expenses? What category or categories of expenses does the remainder of the funding go into?

Answer: In FY 2014, 41 percent of Service funding for Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) was dedicated to salary and benefits. These funds provided each LCC with a coordinator and science coordinator to bring the partners together and ensure the conservation work determined by those partners was on track and completed. Funding priority conservation work

identified by the stakeholders comprised 47 percent of the FY 2014 funding and included projects such as development of a tool by the Appalachian LCC to help aquatic managers prioritize where trees are needed for shade and cold water habitat to keep brook trout, a recreationally important species, viable. Costs related to travel and training accounted for two percent of the funding and costs related to office operating expenses (rent, copying, utilities) accounted for the remaining 10 percent.

Funding for LCCs is leveraged with funding provided by stakeholders interested in LCCs as a tool to drive landscape-scale conservation. Since 2010, more than \$73 million has been provided to the LCCs by Federal agencies (including other DOI bureaus, the Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and U.S. Department of Agriculture) through 690 separate agreements. In addition, the Service's investment in LCCs has leveraged an estimated \$69 million dollars from collaborators such as States, tribes, and non-governmental organizations. This is a conservative estimate because it only counts project dollars and does not include in-kind contributions of staffing, office space, or related items that support LCCs.

Calvert Q59: Your request includes an almost 20% increase over FY15 levels. What is the extra \$12.2 million buying?

Answer: The FY 2016 requested program increase for LCCs (Cooperative Landscape Conservation and Adaptive Science) is \$8.35 million over the FY15 enacted level. Several of the LCCs established in 2010 are producing significant tools and work products. At the same time, there is a growing commitment to the LCCs by the Service's partners, with over 270 organizations formally participating on LCC committees and increased leveraging of partner resources.

In turn, partners are calling upon LCCs to help drive conservation success on the ground. LCCs are positioned to work with partners to identify shared conservation objectives and facilitate coordination, which can help inform conservation investments in a way that minimizes duplication and maximizes results. For example, LCCs are working with 15 Southeastern States and stakeholders to facilitate the development of a shared conservation vision. Together, they are identifying the areas that are most important for wildlife in the Southeastern U.S. and developing a shared framework to inform their conservation investments, which will help drive more effective and efficient conservation efforts.

Similarly, at the request of Northeastern states, LCCs are knitting together multiple State Wildlife Action Plans into a single regional conservation strategy that all partners can use to maximize conservation results and use resources most efficiently. LCC investments are also funding the development of tools to help prioritize fish passage projects across the Great Lakes basin in partnership with the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. These investments will help ensure that native fish can move into historical spawning grounds while minimizing the likelihood that invasive species do not expand their range. In the West, LCCs are working with partners to understand the impacts of invasive species and fire management on species and develop strategies to keep their native wildlife populations and habitat healthy. Providing

funding at the FY 2016 request level will position LCCs to meet these conservation priorities and many others identified collaboratively with the Service's partners.

LCCs have made important investments in conserving at-risk species proactively in partnership with States, before a decision under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is required and helping to avoid regulation. For example, LCC funding supported the five-State strategy to conserve the lesser prairie chicken. Although the lesser prairie chicken was ultimately listed as threatened, landowners following the strategy are provided an exemption under a 4(d) rule of the ESA created by the Service and do not face the regulatory framework of the ESA because of the proactive conservation efforts described in the strategy. Similarly, LCCs have made important investments in science to understand threats to the greater sage grouse, and to help inform strategies to conserve the species before a listing decision under the ESA is required.

In FY 2016, additional funding requested for the LCCs and a \$10.0 million requested increase for the Service Science subactivity, will be used to determine and fund the highest conservation priorities, such as proactive species and landscape-level conservation. For example, hundreds of species in the Southeastern U.S. have been petitioned for listing under the ESA, and these funds will bolster investments in close partnership with States to develop proactive conservation strategies with the goal of conserving species so ESA listing is not needed, or if needed, minimize regulatory burdens for partners who voluntarily choose to engage in the conservation strategies. The Service will work closely with States to identify the species where science investments will have the greatest conservation impact.

Calvert Q60: Has the Service received any interim feedback based on the National Academy of Science's Evaluation of the LCCs?

Answer: The National Academy of Sciences' (NAS) evaluation is now underway and the Service has not received interim feedback. The Service has been working very closely with NAS and has provided significant amounts of information as requested. The Service was actively involved in the first two public or "open" portions of meetings held by NAS in Washington, DC. NAS staff also joined the most recent LCC Council meeting on Thursday, March 26 in Denver, Colorado. The Service will also be an active participant in the open portions of the next meeting of the NAS, which will be held in southern California. The Service expects to receive the NAS evaluation in the fall and looks forward to reviewing and acting upon the recommendations.

Calvert Q61: What is the status of the Science Investment and Accountability Standards (SIAS) tool?

Answer: Over the three years it has been used, the Service has made significant progress on the SIAS tool. SIAS provides a structure to guide the development of individual LCCs to ensure they contribute to the LCC network mission, operate in a similar and collaborative fashion, and build strong linkages so they are an effective network. SIAS is helping ensure all LCCs:

- Develop and provide integrated science-based information about the implications of threats on the sustainability of natural and cultural resources;

- Create shared, landscape-level, conservation goals, objectives, and strategies that are based on a shared scientific understanding about the landscape, including the implications of current and future environmental stressors;
- Facilitate the exchange of applied science in the implementation of conservation strategies and products developed by the LCCs or their partners;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of LCC conservation strategies in meeting shared objectives; and
- Build strong linkages that connect LCCs to ensure an effective network.

The second generation of SIAS was finalized in 2014 with input from each of the 22 LCCs. These revisions notably refined SIAS to better reflect Service's adaptive management framework and staff training was provided to ensure consistent application of the revised benchmarks and ratings across the LCC network. Every LCC completes an SIAS review of its work, which helps the Service understand where LCCs are successful and where there are areas for improvement. The Service remains committed to further refining SIAS over time, helping ensure LCC investments maximize conservation benefits.

Calvert Q62: Why does a SIAS structure need to be developed prior to LCCs establishing explicit conservation objectives and targets? In your opinion, at what point does it become unacceptable for an LCC NOT to have any explicit conservation objectives and targets?

Answer: All of the LCCs are committed to developing landscape priorities and explicit conservation objectives and targets.

All LCCs have made substantial progress toward meeting these benchmarks. For example, about 80 percent of the LCCs have already identified priority resources, and almost all of the LCCs have begun developing measurable outcomes. The Service remains committed to establishing explicit conservation objectives and targets in every LCC.

Refuge Cost Recovery

Calvert Q63: What is the status of this request for authorization through the Natural Resources Committee?

Answer: The Service seeks authority, similar to the National Park Services' "System Unit Resource Protection Act" (SURPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to ensure protection and restoration of Service resources should they be injured by a responsible party. In the 113th Congress, S. 2560, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Protection Act, was introduced and a legislative hearing was held on the bill. The Department strongly supported this bill, which mirrors the proposal in the FY 2016 budget. Currently, in the 114th Congress, a bill has not been introduced.

Calvert Q64: The justification points to NPS and NOAA as having similar authorities. Has FWS collaborated with these agencies to draft similar processes/procedures with regard to how such authority would be used if it is authorized?

Answer: Yes. The Service has discussed the SURPA program with NPS, to understand how they implement their program because the authority the Service seeks is very similar to, and modeled after, that authority. After receiving similar authority under SURPA, the NPS provided guidance on implementing their program through a Damage Assessment Handbook. If provided the authority, the Service will develop policy and guidance to implement its program using the NPS and NOAA programs as models.

Calvert Q65: Have you drafted a Damage Assessment Handbook or anything of the like to provide the public with the procedures you would use so as to be methodical, fair and transparent when assessing and seeking damages directly from individuals?

Answer: The Service has not drafted a Damage Assessment Handbook to recover damages for injured resources from a responsible party, because the Service do not currently have the authority to proceed with such an action. The Service is very familiar with the NPS's Damage Assessment Handbook, and would use it, as well as other policies and implementation guidance for similar programs (e.g., DOI and NOAA's damage assessment programs) to develop policy, technical guidance and best management practices for its program, if the Service is provided the authority. In addition, the Service will develop implementation guidelines and training materials.

Calvert Q66: How would "assessment costs, risk of loss, ongoing effects (of damage), and long-term degradation" of costs be estimated? Who would provide these estimates and where would these decisions be made (at the refuge, regional or headquarter level)? Who would litigate on behalf of FWS (Office of the Solicitor, DoJ, FWS lawyers, etc.)?

Answer: The NPS has developed a very similar program under SURPA, 54 USC 100721. Using the NPS process as a model, the Service will retrieve costs for assessing and restoring injured resources through the damages the Service recovers from responsible parties. The Administration proposal and S. 2560, introduced during the 113th Congress, proposes to deposit the recovered funds into the DOI Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) fund, as is done with natural resource damages recovered under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) and SURPA. These funds would be maintained separately and used to replace, restore, or acquire the equivalent of the damaged Service resource.

Many models exist to assess value to injured resources, including Habitat Equivalency Analyses (HEAs) and Resource Equivalency Analyses (REAs) which are generally used to evaluate replacement costs under OPA. Agencies, such as NOAA, NPS and State Resource Trustees use combinations of these models to evaluate damages depending on the specific circumstance. Some resources, such as structures (e.g., sign posts, kiosks, etc.) will have a specific replacement/repair cost based on market value of labor and materials. The Service and DOI have experts in evaluating costs associated with damage assessment and restoration. Experts are well-versed in Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration as it applies to the OPA and CERCLA. The Service will use a combination of economists, refuge managers, biologists, other scientists, and legal experts to assess damage requests. Legal assistance will be provided to the Service by the DOI Solicitor's office and when necessary, DOJ.

Duck Stamp

Calvert Q67: Isn't an increase in price expected in June 2015? From what amount to what amount? Was that increase authorized to account solely for inflation?

Answer: To help offset the impacts of inflation and the erosion of the Stamp's purchasing power due to increased land values, through the Federal Duck Stamp Act of 2014, Congress increased the price of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp from \$15 to \$25. The hunting year 2015-2016 Duck Stamp will be printed at the new price and will go on sale on June 30, 2015. The price of the Duck Stamp had not been raised since 1991. Adjusting for inflation alone, \$15 in 1991 is equivalent to \$25.85 in 2015. This is significant because land acquisition prices can escalate 200%-400% in areas where there is development pressure.

Calvert Q68: Would authority be limited to raising prices to account for inflation, or could the authority also be used based on other factors, like say, increased needs (for funding)?

Answer: Future price increases would be to account for inflation and the erosion of purchasing power. Prior to any increases, the Service will conduct an economic study to determine whether a price increase is warranted based on those factors.

Law Enforcement

The FY15 request highlighted the "Service's National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (Lab)" and requested (and received) over a million dollar increase to strengthen law enforcement efforts and add FTEs. A new forensics lab is highlighted in the FY16 budget – a "Digital Evidence and Recovery Computer Forensics Lab" in Jacksonville, FL.

Calvert Q69: How many forensics labs does FWS have?

Answer: The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), has two separate laboratory (labs) locations that provide forensic support to USFWS/OLE: the National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory (NFWFL) in Ashland, Oregon; and the Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit (DERTSU) in Jacksonville, Florida.

The NFWFL provides traditional crime lab support such as DNA analysis, finger-print analysis, and wildlife identification. The lab provides the capacity to scientifically identify the species source of wildlife parts and products to provide evidence of criminal activity in wildlife investigations. With regard to animals, the lab can determine species, cause of death, if a violation of law occurred, and analyze physical evidence to determine if suspect, victim, and crime scene are linked.

The DERTSU is a national digital forensic and technical surveillance program, which provides highly-technical digital forensic and covert surveillance equipment program support solely for the purpose of combatting organized wildlife crime, both domestic and international. With criminal networks using digital technology such as smartphones, computers, and GIS, it is

imperative staff are knowledgeable about proper evidence handling and examination processes, and are skilled in the technical aspects of writing search warrants for digital evidence seizure.

Calvert Q70: How did increased FY15 investments in law enforcement and forensics impact the work that is and will be done in Jacksonville?

Answer: None of the increased funding from 2015 went to the Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit lab in Jacksonville. The increased funding for forensics in 2015 was directed to the NFWFL in Ashland, Oregon to address shortfalls in scientific capability and expertise and is unrelated to the work that is done in Jacksonville. The FY 2015 funding increase is being used by NFWFL to expand research involving genetic markers and isotope analysis, to further advance the lab's ability to determine origin or geographic source of illicit wildlife material. Determining species source is one of the most utilized capabilities of NFWFL, as conclusive evidence of criminal activity often hinges on determining the specific origin of the animal or animal part(s). However, this is also the area of expertise most difficult to replace because formal training programs do not exist and the scientific expertise has to be learned over the course of several years on the job. The FY 2015 funding increase also allowed NFWFL to fill vacant positions to ensure continued forensic science expertise is available to support OLE investigations.

Environmental Contaminants

Increases in funding and FTEs are requested under the EC component of Ecological Services. According to performance metric CSF 14.3, it doesn't look like additional coordination responses and/or formal/informal biological consultations would be provided in a timely manner. (The metric improves, but only because the total number of consultations expected decreases.)

Calvert Q71: How will coordination improve and timely responses/consultations be provided, specifically with regard to pesticides and the work that needs to be done with EPA, NMFS and USDA counterparts, with the requested increases in funding and FTEs?

Answer: Since 2013, we have been working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to implement a number of recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences intended to improve and streamline the risk assessment and consultation processes for pesticides (National Academy of Sciences, *Assessing Risks to Endangered and Threatened Species from Pesticides*, 2013). Implementation of these recommendations requires development of new methods to assess the ecological risk of pesticides to listed species, with the need for refinement over time.

The Service is also improving its efficiency by considering application of pesticides nationally. This approach allows the Service to consider the impacts to more than 1,400 listed species as opposed to performing numerous consultations across limited geographies and with a focus on single listed species. The Service has also reached settlement agreements with the respective plaintiffs to address agency-specific lawsuits at a national scale, and have increased transparency of the consultation process by directly engaging registrants and other stakeholders and providing opportunities for public comment throughout the process.

The Service has made significant progress thus far by working together with EPA, NMFS, and USDA on the analyses for the national consultations. The requested increases in funding and FTEs will allow the Service to 1) continue to develop and refine the new methods as it concurrently moves ahead with consultations, and 2) work more effectively and efficiently on multiple, overlapping national consultations that must be completed over the next several years per the terms of settlement agreements and associated consultation deadlines as well as for future pesticide registrations and registration reviews.

Refuge Cleanup

GAO's January 2015 report "HAZARDOUS WASTE - Agencies Should Take Steps to Improve Information on USDA's and Interior's Potentially Contaminated Sites" notes that FWS has identified approximately 32 sites with likely or confirmed contamination, and that funding for cleanup has historically come from a "Refuge Cleanup Fund". The FY16 budget request mentions that a "Refuge Cleanup Program" exists within the Refuge System Contaminants Program, but it doesn't mention a Refuge Cleanup Fund, nor does it note the amount expected to go towards these efforts in FY16.

Calvert Q72: How much money, on how many projects/sites, was spent on cleanup of contaminated sites in FY15?

Answer: In FY 2015, the Service dedicated \$612,800 for cleanup of contamination at six sites.

Calvert Q73: How much money, on how many projects/sites, will be used on cleanup of contaminated sites in FY16? Recognizing that many projects/sites are multi-year efforts, are any projects/sites expected to be finished and clean this year?

Answer: Projects for FY 2016 have not been solicited, but should the Service receive the FY 2016 budget request, it is estimated that \$600,000 will be dedicated for refuge cleanup projects.

In FY 2015, the Service expects to complete a 10-year project for cleanup of petroleum contaminated soils. Additionally, seven firing range cleanup projects are expected to be completed along with several site assessments to determine the extent of contamination.

Questions from Chairman Rogers**National Fish Hatchery System**

Under current Fish and Wildlife Service leadership, the National Fish Hatchery System appears to be shifting resources further towards endangered species and away from mitigation/recreational fishing species. The Service put out a report in 2013 saying that propagation of fish for mitigation and recreational fishing are its lowest priorities, and that the Service will focus on higher priorities even if the hatchery system budget were to increase by five percent. In response, Congress increased the budget by 10 percent.

Rogers Q1: The Service indicated that it needed more than a five percent increase in the budget in order to keep raising fish for recreational purposes. Congress has appropriated a 10 percent increase in FY15. Is the Service utilizing these budget increases to maintain the mitigation/recreational fishing aspect of the program, as Congress intended?

Answer: Yes, the Service is using these increases to keep recreational fish in production and hatcheries open and appreciates the support for the National Fish Hatchery System provided by Congress. In addition, the Service is complying with Congressional direction to seek reimbursement for fish production operations to mitigate for the impacts associated with Federal water development projects. Over the past several years, the Service has successfully negotiated reimbursement with the Corps, TVA, and others, to help cover the costs associated with mitigation fish production.

In the FY2015 explanatory statement, Congress directed the Service to provide budget allocation information which the Service has yet to provide. Congress and the public need this information to determine if, in fact, the National Fish Hatchery System is maintaining the status quo with the funds Congress appropriated.

Rogers Q2: When will the Service send Congress the hatchery operations plans and budget allocation reports, as the Appropriations Committee has requested, so that it can verify how much of the \$6 million increase appropriated in Fiscal Year 2015 has gone into expanding the Service's ESA priorities, versus how much has gone into shoring up Congress's recreational fishing priorities?

Answer: The Service appreciates the support Congress has shown for the National Fish Hatchery System and the funding increase provided in fiscal year 2015. The Service submitted the report to the Subcommittees on April 17, 2015.

Northern Long-Eared Bat: Endangered Species Act

The Fish and Wildlife Service has been considering listing the Northern Long-Eared Bat as threatened or endangered since early 2014.

Rogers Q3: What is the timeline for the Service's decision on this proposed listing? Does the Service still anticipate making a decision next month in April?

Answer: Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) was required to publish a final listing determination for the northern long-eared bat on or before April 2, 2015. The final rule listing this bat as a threatened species and an accompanying interim 4(d) rule were published in the *Federal Register* on April 2, 2015 and are effective on May 4, 2015.

Rogers Q4: Does the Service anticipate issuing a listing of threatened or endangered for the species?

Answer: The Service has determined that the northern long-eared bat is a threatened species under the ESA. The final rule listing this bat as a threatened species and an accompanying interim 4(d) rule were published in the *Federal Register* on April 2, 2015 and are effective on May 4, 2015.

It is very clear to this Committee that there are numerous land use practices that will be significantly impacted by listing this species as threatened or endangered. If these practices are banned, it will mean significant job losses - all throughout the 38 states where this bat lives.

Rogers Q5: What land use activities have you decided to exempt from regulations associated with a potential listing at this point in the process?

Answer: The Service has published an interim 4(d) rule that accompanies the final listing determination as a threatened species. The rule attempts to take a more flexible approach to protecting this particular threatened species by focusing on the greatest risks to the northern long-eared bat and exempts take that may result from other practices that are believed to be lesser threats to the species. For areas of the country impacted by white-nose syndrome, the measures provided in the interim 4(d) rule exempt take from the following activities: forest management practices; maintenance and limited expansion of transportation and utility rights-of-way; prairie habitat management; limited tree removal projects, provided these activities protect known maternity roosts and hibernacula; removal of hazardous trees; removal of northern long-eared bats from human dwellings; and authorized capture and handling of northern long-eared bat by individuals permitted to conduct these same activities for other bats (for a period of one year).

Take incidental to forest management practices, maintenance and limited expansion of transportation and utility rights-of-way, prairie habitat management, and limited tree removal projects conducted in accordance with the following habitat conservation measures, as applicable, is permissible if activities: (i) occur more than 0.25 mile (0.4 km) from a known, occupied hibernacula; (ii) avoid cutting or destroying known, occupied roost trees during the pup season (June 1–July 31); and (iii) avoid clearcuts (and similar harvest methods, e.g. seed tree,

shelterwood and coppice) within 0.25 (0.4 km) mile of known, occupied roost trees during the pup season (June 1–July 31).

Further, for areas of the country not affected by white-nose syndrome (i.e. areas outside the white-nose syndrome buffer zone), the interim 4(d) rule exempts incidental take from all activities. The Service has opened a 90-day public comment period on the interim 4(d) rule and seeks public comment on whether it would be appropriate to cover take resulting from other activities under a final 4(d) rule. The comment period closes on July 1, 2015.

It is my understanding that human activity is not the primary reason for the bat's decline in population. Rather, the real culprit is the white nose syndrome (WNS), caused by a fungus that thrives in the caves where the bat lives. Bearing this in mind, it is concerning that there are several human activities that are not contributing to the decline in long-eared bat population that the Service has neglected to include in its list of exceptions in the proposed rule. Most notably, oil and gas development, mining, commercial timber harvesting, residential building and agriculture are not included in your proposed list of exceptions.

Rogers Q6: Is the Service considering including additional land use practices in the list of exceptions?

Answer: The Service are opening a 90-day public comment period on the interim rule to gather additional information as the Service work to refine and finalize the 4(d) rule which may change from the interim 4(d) rule. The comment period closes on July 1, 2015.

Rogers Q7: If so, will the Service provide clarification on the complete list of exceptions before FWS makes a final determination on the listing of this species?

Answer: In the proposed 4(d) rule, the Service specifically asked for comments on “Whether it may be appropriate to except incidental take as a result of other categories of activities beyond those covered in this proposed rule and, if so, under what conditions and with what conservation measures.” Due to the complexity of this issue, the volume of comments and the limited time between proposing the 4(d) rule and the date that the final listing rule had to be published, the Service decided to publish an interim 4(d) rule. An interim 4(d) rule allows incidental take exemptions to be in place when the listing of the northern long-eared bat becomes final, but also allows us additional time to open another public comment period and engage with stakeholders to explore whether additional exemptions should be included in a final 4(d) rule. The Service’s intent is to issue an affirmation of this interim rule or a final species-specific rule under section 4(d) of the Act for the northern long-eared bat by the end of the calendar year 2015.

Questions from Mr. Simpson**Sage-Grouse**

Simpson Q1: In terms of differences between State sage-grouse plans, Secretary Jewell told this subcommittee that if a sage-grouse listing happens, it would be a one-fall, all-fall scenario in terms of State to State differences. Do you agree, or is there still some wiggle room for States with sage-grouse plans that the Service agrees with?

Answer: The Service recognizes the immense effort undertaken by State partners to revise their management plans to conserve the greater sage-grouse and its habitat. The Service will be evaluating the status of greater sage-grouse throughout its range. Although some plans may afford greater protections and more completely address the threats in the 2010 warranted but precluded finding, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) allows us to list only certain entities including: species, subspecies, or distinct population segments (DPS). A political boundary, such as a State border, may not be biologically meaningful to the species nor meet the criteria of the DPS policy.

Simpson Q2: It is my understanding that Idaho has a good plan that has been commended by both BLM and your agency. Have you been communicating with BLM about the Idaho plan, and what you would like to see to avoid a listing?

Answer: The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) has prepared a draft greater sage-grouse conservation plan for its 2.5 million acres of State endowment lands, half of which contain sage-grouse habitat. The Service and BLM are actively engaged with the State to further revise its draft plan to achieve greater sage-grouse conservation including the identification of measures and mechanisms to promote conservation on private lands. With regard to private lands, leadership from the Governor, via support for Rural Fire Protection Associations and other State resources, has been and will continue to be very important. Additionally, the Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) continue to engage private landowners in Idaho to raise awareness and facilitate participation in partnerships to conserve greater sage-grouse and sustain working landscapes.

Simpson Q3: It is my understanding that the sage-grouse determination will still be made - regardless of the FY15 language included in the so called "cromnibus" - and the rule cannot be written with the FY 15 language in place. Will the listing determination have any impact without the existence of a written rule?

Answer: Any determination that the species warrants protections of the ESA would have no legal effect in the absence of publication of a listing rule in the Federal Register. A determination that the species does not warrant ESA protection would have the immediate legal effect of concluding the petition process for the greater sage-grouse and no rulemaking would be required.

Simpson Q4: If so, what are the impacts of a determination without a rule that lists the species?

Answer: If the Service determines that the listing is warranted, the species would simply remain on the candidate list, as it has been for five years. Candidate status alerts stakeholders of the current status of the species and encourages further conservation that could affect a future listing rule. If the Service determines that listing is not warranted, the species would be removed from the candidate list.

Simpson Q5: In the overall picture, what exactly has to happen at this point for you to decide that sage-grouse does NOT warrant a listing later this year? There are lots of players and lots of plans in the process. What needs to be done to prevent a listing?

Answer: There is tremendous momentum occurring on the ground to conserve sage steppe habitat. This includes development of the foundational science guiding the planning and listing determination processes, conservation agreements with private landowners, and planning efforts by State and Federal land managers to address impacts to greater sage-grouse and protect the species' habitat. Approximately 60 percent of the greater sage-grouse's 165 million acres of occupied range occur on federally managed lands. Strong Federal plans must be completed to change the regulatory framework that was in place at the time of the 2010 finding.

The 2010 finding identified rangeland fire as one of the greatest threats to sage steppe habitat and the species it supports. The BLM, the Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U. S. Forest Service, NRCS, Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the States are collaborating in an unprecedented manner on rangeland fire assessments and plans that will make efforts to prevent, suppress and restore habitat after rangeland fires significantly more effective. The Service and its partners are putting a more effective rangeland fire strategy into place, built largely on these efforts. Once these efforts are in place and with finalization of plans to limit disturbance in sage steppe habitat in States like Colorado, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon, the habitat will have changed dramatically since the Service made its determination in 2010. The Service's leadership is hopeful, though of course not certain, that based on continued progress, the Service may reach a not warranted determination.

If momentum slows, and the sense of urgency dissipates or, if plans are weakened or left incomplete, it's possible that the Nation will have missed its opportunity to act, and the landscape will only become more fragmented and the invasive species and fire cycle more severe with devastating impacts not only to wildlife but to the way of life in the West.

Simpson Q6: Secretary Salazar once told this committee that he was the defendant in 3,000 lawsuits. Clearly either way the sage-grouse decision is decided, there will be lawsuits. Can you explain the steps USFWS is taking to prepare for this?

Answer: ESA decisions are often controversial, and any final decision regarding listing of the greater sage-grouse will be no exception. The FWS has worked hard to put in place a transparent and scientifically defensible process to evaluate the status of the species. The FWS will be maintaining a comprehensive record of the information received and how it was used. Such a record will serve as the basis for defending any listing decision.

Questions from Mr. Amodei**Greater Sage-Grouse**

Last year, the Secretary of Interior announced Secretarial Order 3336 to protect the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem in the Great Basin area from wildland fire and invasive species. The Department also plans to implement a National Seed Strategy and Implementation Plan to address invasive species, altered wildfire regimes, habitat fragmentation and ecological restoration in the West. Additionally, the Department of Agriculture recently announced a commitment to provide an additional \$207 million to greater sage-grouse conservation bringing their total commitment under the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sage-Grouse Initiative to \$763 million.

Amodei Q1: Does the Service consider these combined efforts to be an unprecedented commitment by the Department of Interior towards protecting and conserving the Sage hen and its sagebrush steppe ecosystem?

Answer: Yes, these investments are unprecedented and come at a critical time for a landscape that is under threat. They play a significant role in two of the three central tenants of the Service's approach to conserving the sagebrush-steppe and the wildlife and economic activity that depend on it.

The collaborative Federal-State approach can be described as three-pronged:

- 1) Federal lands.** Approximately 60 percent of the greater sage-grouse's 165 million acres of occupied range occur on federally managed lands. Currently, the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service are analyzing amendments to existing land use plans to incorporate appropriate conservation measures to conserve, enhance and restore greater sage-grouse habitat by reducing, eliminating or minimizing threats to the habitat.
- 2) State and Private Lands.** Complementing Federal efforts, 11 Western States are implementing plans to conserve and restore sagebrush-steppe landscapes on State and private lands, addressing threats from development, invasive species, and fire. About 40 percent of sage grouse habitat occurs on privately owned lands. The NRCS and its partners in the Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) have worked with private landowners to restore 4.4 million acres of habitat for sage-grouse while maintaining working landscapes across the West.
- 3) Invasive species and Fire.** Building on the work of many States, the Department is taking actions to immediately address the threat of rangeland fire to Western sagebrush-steppe landscapes in the Great Basin for the 2015 wildfire season and beyond. The actions are designed to reduce the size, severity and cost of rangeland fires; address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species; and position wildland fire management resources for more effective response.

Amodei Q2: Included in Secretarial Order 3336, the Task Force is required to “provide the Secretary two reports that outline actions that can be accomplished prior to the onset of the 2015 Western fire season, actions that can be accomplished prior to the onset of the 2016 Western fire season, and actions that will require a longer period for implementation.” Such actions include “establishing protocols for monitoring the effectiveness of fuels management, post-fire, and long-term restoration treatments and a strategy for adaptive management to modify management practices or improve land treatments when necessary.”

Is Service concerned about issuing a listing determination for the Sage hen before monitoring of the effectiveness of the fuels management and habitat restoration policies outlined in the Secretarial Order are conducted?

Answer: The Service is obligated to review and evaluate the status of greater sage-grouse based on the best available scientific and commercial data available. The Service expects that the information obtained through monitoring and adaptive management will help shape the understanding and refinement of approaches and techniques for fuels management and habitat restoration in the sage-steppe ecosystem. The Secretarial Order and resultant reports are an important step forward and the Service will be able to consider immediately any policy changes that direct the prioritization and implementation of improved science-based methods for rangeland fire.

Amodei Q3: Would the Service prefer more time to monitor the results and effectiveness of these unprecedented rangeland management efforts and policies before issuing a listing determination?

Answer: The ESA requires the use of the best available information in determining the status of a species. The FWS is considering the best information available, including input from partners and stakeholders. The FWS expects the best information available will support completion of a final listing determination within the time allowed under the court ordered settlement.

Amodei Q4: To what extent will implementation of S.O. 3336 factor into the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Sage hen listing determination?

Answer: The Service’s 2010 status review and the 2013 Conservation Objectives Team (COT) Report both identified wildfire and the spread of invasive species as important impacts that if not addressed, would continue to significantly negatively affect the species’ habitat and ability to survive into the future. The FWS will evaluate S.O. 3336 and all other efforts in its decision regarding the current and future status of the species.

Amodei Q5: Is the Service concerned that if the Sage hen is listed, voluntary conservation efforts and financial commitments—from state and private landowners—to protect the species will decline?

Answer: The Service is committed to working collaboratively with others to maintain working lands and the sage-steppe landscape. The Service’s dedication to this landscape will continue

regardless of the result of the status review, and the Service will continue to work with partners to promote Federal, State, and private conservation efforts.

Amodei Q6: If the Sage hen listing determination will occur on or before September 30, 2015, why is the Service requesting \$5 million for 20 new full-time employees for conservation in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem for FY2016?

Answer: The Service is committed to working with States and partners on conservation efforts in this largely intact landscape after September 30, 2015. The best strategy the Service can pursue is to keep making investments in sagebrush steppe conservation. There are also many species that rely on this ecosystem including small mammals such as pygmy rabbits and sagebrush voles, reptiles like the sagebrush lizard, bird species such as sage sparrow, Brewer's sparrow, sage thrasher, and golden eagles, and game species such as pronghorn, mule deer, and elk, regardless of the outcome of the sage-grouse status review. Partners ranging from Federal land management agencies to States to private landowners are increasingly coming together to identify and pursue strategies to arrest the decline of sagebrush and dependent species across the range. The FWS is an active partner in these efforts and while much of the attention is currently focused on the greater sage-grouse, the larger issues underlying the status of the sage-grouse, namely the invasive species-wildfire nexus and the need to responsibly develop energy and other natural resources, affect a broad suite of wildlife and must be successfully managed if the sage steppe ecosystem is to remain a vibrant and functional landscape that supports diverse wildlife and economic activity.

The Service requested an increase of \$4.0 million to continue investing in partnership efforts such as working with States like Wyoming and Nevada to implement and monitor the results of their conservation efforts, continuing to provide support and technical expertise to BLM and the U.S. Forest Service in the implementation of their plans, continuing to leverage the Service's partnership with NRCS and SGI, and continuing to provide assurances to landowners through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances.

Amodei Q7: How does the Service's FY16 budget request address the reality that wildfires on the sagebrush-steppe lead to invasive species such as cheatgrass, and cheatgrass is one of the primary threats to sage hen habitat? (See USGS map of wildfire, cheatgrass and pinyon-juniper).

Answer: The Service is an active partner in the effort to address the threats of fire and the spread of invasive species in the sage-steppe landscape, and the FY 2016 increase requested will support the Service's capacity to continue this important effort. The Service has partnered with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and others to produce several publications related to land management recommendations for controlling and reducing the spread of invasive species and synthesizing recommendations related to rangeland fire management and restoration efforts. Further, the Service is working with its partners, following the direction outlined in S.O. 3336, to understand the impacts of fire and invasive species and determine the best means of reducing these impacts. The Service recognizes the impacts of fire and invasives and the relationship between the two that can lead to a cycle of further degradation to sage-grouse habitat. The Service will continue to engage in these efforts and work

collaboratively with partners to identify and implement solutions to achieve the goals outlined in S.O. 3336.

Grazing & Wild Horses

Included in the Department's FY2016 budget request is \$8 million for a proposed Grazing Administration Management fee program. Of the estimated \$16.5 million the BLM would collect in 2016 from this program, about half, or \$8 million, would support a new permit processing and monitoring of livestock use in sage-grouse habitat. The increase in monitoring effort is expected to occur in the allotments currently monitored, which means there will be an increased number of compliance visits to each allotment.

Amodei Q8: What percentage of Sage hen habitat fragmentation in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem is cattle grazing responsible for?

Answer: Improper livestock grazing can contribute to habitat degradation and fragmentation of sagebrush-steppe habitat. The 2013 Conservation Objectives Team (COT) Report describes improper grazing as having negative impacts on sage-grouse habitats and provides management objectives to help address these impacts. The COT report identified 48 populations of greater sage-grouse; of these, grazing had a widespread impact on 32 populations, a localized impact on one population, and an unknown or not known to be present impact on 15 populations.

Amodei Q9: How many acres in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem do wild horses and burros occupy?

Answer: According to a 2013 USGS report entitled "Summary of Science, Activities, Programs, and Policies That Influence the Rangeland Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse," the BLM manages wild horses and burros on approximately 14.6 million acres of sage-grouse habitat predominantly in Nevada, southwest Wyoming and southeast Oregon.

Amodei Q10: What percentage of Sage hen habitat fragmentation in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem are wild horses and burros responsible for?

Answer: Overpopulation of wild horses and burros can contribute to degradation and fragmentation of sagebrush-steppe habitat, although it was not identified as a cause of habitat fragmentation in the COT report.

Rangeland Management

Under the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI), more than 3.8 million acres of sage-grouse habitat across the 11-state range have been conserved. Additionally, with NRCS's continued funding commitment of \$207 million through 2018, the Department of Agriculture is projecting another 4 million acres will be conserved for the benefit of the sage-grouse bringing the NRCS' total commitment since 2010 to \$763 million. Furthermore, your testimony points out the Service's need for a \$4 million increase in 2016 to "achieve sustainable conservation success for the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem."

Amodei Q11: How much of the \$4 million increase would be spent on the ground protecting and conserving the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem?

Answer: The Service's partners are pursuing strategies to arrest the decline of sagebrush and dependent species across the range. The Service requested an increase of \$4.0 million to continue investing in partnership efforts. This includes work with States like Wyoming and Nevada to implement and monitor the results of their conservation efforts; continuing to provide support and technical expertise to BLM and U.S. Forest Service in the implementation of their plans; continued leverage of the Service's partnership with NRCS and SGI; and ongoing efforts to provide assistance to landowners through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances.

Listing Decision

Amodei Q12: Does the Service believe a "determination" (not a rule) of whether or not to list the Sage hen would be legally binding?

Answer: Any determination that the species warrants protections of the ESA would have no legal effect without the rulemaking process. A determination that the species does not warrant protections of the ESA would have the immediate legal effect of concluding the petition process for the sage-grouse—no rulemaking would be required.

Amodei Q13: Does the Service believe it is precluded from issuing a finding that the Sage hen is *not* warranted for listing?

Answer: No, the Service is only precluded from writing or issuing a proposed listing rule.

Amodei Q14: Will the Service take public comment on its "determination"?

Answer: The Service accepts and encourages submittal of any new information, materials, comments, or questions regarding any published listing decisions at all times. But a finding under 16 U.S.C. § 1533(b)(3)(B) is not an Administrative Procedure Act rulemaking subject to mandatory public notice and comment, so the Service does not intend to publish a draft determination and seek public comment on that draft.

Honoring Secretary Salazar's Commitment to Work with the States

To honor this invitation, the State Plans need more time to be implemented and to document their effectiveness in protecting sage-grouse and its habitat. That is the only way to make sense of Secretary Salazar's invitation.

Amodei Q15: How does the Service intend to honor the invitation that then Secretary Ken Salazar issued in 2011 to the Western Governors inviting them to develop state-led sage-grouse conservation plans for the purpose of avoiding/minimizing the need to list the bird?

Answer: The Service's relationship with affected States is collaborative, and it acknowledges the States' management authority for sage-grouse (and expertise in managing the species). The Service is an active participant in the Western Governor's Sage-Grouse Task Force. Further, the Service has engaged the States in every aspect of sage-grouse work and key technical products such as the COT Report and the Conservation Efforts Database.

The Service has also worked with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to fund important scientific research on invasive species and wildfire in the Great Basin and is a member of various technical and policy-level teams led by the States, such as the Governors' Sage-Grouse Task Force. Lastly, the Service maintains a high degree of transparency in conducting ESA status review and provides regular updates to State wildlife agency leadership on this process.

Amodei Q16: Why isn't the Service seeking more time by asking the judge in the settlement case to provide several more years for the State Plans to be implemented? Without this request, Secretary Salazar's invitation seems to be a hollow gesture and the states have spent millions in state taxpayers' dollars to develop plans that are rendered meaningless because of the arbitrary decision deadline in the settlement. The States' incurred this expense in response to and in reliance upon Secretary Salazar's invitation.

Answer: The Service's 2011 Multi-District Litigation (MDL) Settlement Agreements explicitly require the Service to submit a proposed listing rule or a not-warranted finding for the greater sage-grouse to the Federal Register by no later than the end of Fiscal Year 2015 (*See In re ESA Section 4 Deadline Litig.*, 716 F. Supp. 2d 1369 (J.P.M.L. 2010), Dkt 31-1 at Paragraph 2 and Dkt. 42-1 at Paragraph B.3.c.). The Service's *Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts When Making Listing Decisions* permits the Service to analyze formalized conservation efforts that have not yet been implemented or demonstrated effective when making a decision whether to list a species under the Act if the Service can establish certainty that conservation efforts will be implemented, and effective. There is currently tremendous momentum to complete the federal land management plans and strengthen state conservation efforts. The Service recognize the unprecedented efforts being made by State partners and will consider their plans in conjunction with other conservation efforts entered in the Service's Conservation Efforts Database and the plans from BLM and the U.S. Forest Service.

Questions from Ms. Pingree**Northern Long Eared Bat and listing on ESA**

In my state there is a great interest in the northern long eared bat which has been proposed for listing as part of the ESA. I have mentioned to you in past hearings how I support the work you are doing on invasive species and understanding the threat to these bats in white-nose syndrome. The work of the FWS on white nose syndrome in bats is to be commended. With White Nose Syndrome now identified in over 20 states and 5 Canadian provinces, it is more important than ever to get a handle on the spread of this disease.

I know that part of your goal has been to look at the White Nose Syndrome genes and find a way to silence them so that we can get a handle on the spread of this disease. And your North American bat monitoring program will continue this work and the work of understanding this disease. I know that the FWS commitment to this issue is strong but we need to do more if we are going to get a handle on this disease's spread. As part of this disease's spread the northern long eared bat has been proposed for ESA consideration.

Pingree Q1: What is the Service's reasoning behind proposing a special 4(d) rule concurrent with proposing to list the northern long-eared bat as endangered?

Answer: On January 15, 2015, the Service published a proposed rule under section 4(d) of the ESA for the northern long-eared bat so that if a final determination was made to list the bat as a threatened species instead of an endangered species, a 4(d) rule could be issued concurrently with the final listing determination. However, due to significant public comment on the proposed 4(d) rule the Service is publishing an interim rule 4(d) rule in conjunction with the final rule to list the northern long-eared bat as a threatened species. The Service is also opening a 90-day public comment period on the interim rule to gather additional information as it works to refine and finalize the 4(d) rule. The interim rule takes effect on May 4, 2015 and the public comment period closes on July 1, 2015.

Pingree Q2: What types of activities would the proposed 4(d) rule exempt from ESA regulations? And particularly can you tell me how will those exemptions apply to forestry activities?

Answer: The Service has published an interim 4(d) rule that accompanies the final listing determination as a threatened species. For areas of the country impacted by white-nose syndrome, the measures provided in the interim 4(d) rule exempt take from the following activities: forest management practices; maintenance and limited expansion of transportation and utility rights-of-way; prairie habitat management; limited tree removal projects, provided these activities protect known maternity roosts and hibernacula; removal of hazardous trees; removal of northern long-eared bats from human dwellings; and authorized capture and handling of northern long-eared bat by individuals permitted to conduct these same activities for other bats (for a period of one year).

The Service considers forest management practices to include a suite of activities used to maintain and manage forest ecosystems, including, but not limited to, timber harvest and other silvicultural treatments, prescribed burning, invasive species control, wildlife openings and temporary roads. These activities must be carried out using the applicable conservation measures in the interim 4(d) rule, along with applicable state water quality best management practices.

The conversion of mature hardwood, or mixed forest into intensively managed monoculture pine plantation stands is not exempted under this interim rule, as typically these types of monoculture pine plantations provide very poor-quality bat habitat.

Further, in parts of the country not affected by white-nose syndrome, the interim 4(d) recognizes activities that result in incidental take of bats are not imperiling the species and therefore, all incidental take is exempt from the ESA's prohibitions.

Pingree Q3: If the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service makes a decision to list the Northern Long Eared Bat as a "threatened" species and utilizes the "4(d)" rule that would allow for forest management exemptions from forest management restrictions, could you tell us more specifically what those exemptions would be and how they would apply to forest management?

Answer: The Service considers forest management practices to include a suite of activities used to maintain and manage forest ecosystems, including, but not limited to, timber harvest and other silvicultural treatments, prescribed burning, invasive species control, wildlife openings and temporary roads. These activities must be carried out using the applicable conservation measures in the interim 4(d) rule, along with applicable State water quality best management practices.

The conversion of mature hardwood, or mixed forest into intensively managed monoculture pine plantation stands is not exempted under this interim rule, as typically these types of monoculture pine plantations provide very poor-quality bat habitat.

Further, in parts of the country not affected by white-nose syndrome, the interim 4(d) rule recognizes activities that result in incidental take of bats are not imperiling the species and therefore, all incidental take is exempt from the ESA's prohibitions.

Pingree Q4: Does forest management in any part of the species' range needs to be altered to improve the species' prospects?

Answer: In parts of the country where northern long-eared bat are affected by white-nose syndrome, take incidental to forest management practices, conducted in accordance with the following habitat conservation measures, as applicable, is permissible if the activities: (i) Occur more than 0.25 mile (0.4 km) from a known, occupied hibernacula; (ii) Avoid cutting or destroying known, occupied roost trees during the pup season (June 1–July 31); (iii) Avoid clearcuts (and similar harvest methods, e.g. seed tree, shelterwood and coppice) within 0.25 (0.4 km) mile of known, occupied roost trees during the pup season (June 1–July 31).

In parts of the country not affected by white-nose syndrome, the rule recognizes activities that result in incidental take of bats are not imperiling the species and therefore, all incidental take is exempt from the ESA's prohibitions.

Aquatic Drug Approval Program Cuts

As you know, Maine is proud of its fishery. We have a great track record of producing seafood that is popular locally and nationwide. Because of the value of this fishery it is no surprise that much research around fish production and fish health is done in my state.

I want to ask you about changes to the Aquatic Drug Approval Partnership.

I have heard about this program from some of the researchers that work on a daily basis not only trying to understand the diseases that affect our fish, but also to establish safe and effective treatment options to protect against them.

The work of this small program on drugs used in Aquaculture is very important, but base funding has already been cut by a seventy percent in recent years.

The move to an entirely "user-pay" system has researchers concerned that there will be a lack of federal investment that will lead not only to a greatly reduced program but also may lead to eventual elimination.

Pingree Q5: Can you tell me about the proposed policy changes to this program and to the Service's Hatchery program? Can you tell me what your commitment is to this program even in light of "user-pay" proposals? Are not safe and effective legal drugs important to Fish and Wildlife Service fisheries programs across the country?

Answer: Beginning in FY 2013, working hand-in-hand with many of its partners, the Service increased efforts to make Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership a more self-sufficient program. This included efforts to obtain funding from research grants and to reevaluate Investigational New Animal Drug fees, unchanged since 1999, to recover a larger percentage of the costs of providing these services. The Service has heard the concerns expressed by Congress and many partners and stakeholders, and is working to ensure the program remains viable and productive in order to meet the needs of the Service, its partners, and stakeholders.

Currently, the Service is the only Federal agency that pro-actively commits base funds to support FDA approval of new drugs for use in aquatic species. The Service's concern over the lack of safe and effective drugs for aquatic species led us to establish AADAP in 1995.

Pingree Q6: What outreach have you been able to do with the stakeholders on these issues? Can you give the Committee some assurances that you will go forward even more proactively with engagement and consultation with stakeholders?

Answer: The Fish and Aquatic Conservation program sought feedback on the National Fish Hatchery System and AADAP throughout the spring and summer of 2014 with targeted outreach

to states, tribes, NGOs, and other federal agencies. Service leadership gathered feedback through in-person meetings, briefings, phone calls and via email. The Service has received letters from states, tribes, hatchery friends groups, local governments, communities, and individuals.

The Service remains committed to working with the States and other partners and stakeholders to chart a course forward for the NFHS and AADAP - a future that allows us not only to operate the NFHS on a sound financial footing but also to position it to better meet the conservation challenges of today and tomorrow.

Questions from Mr. Kilmer**National Fish Hatchery System**

Hatchery programs play a critical role in supporting recovery of endangered species fish stocks and are critical to meeting our treaty and trust obligations to federal tribes.

Kilmer Q1: How do we ensure the success of the National Fish Hatchery System?

Answer: Continuing the success of the National Fish Hatchery System depends on adequate water, secure funding, adequate staffing levels, and sound infrastructure. Continued support from the States, tribes, Congress, and other stakeholders is critical.

It is my understanding that there remains a significant backlog of Hatchery Genetic Management Plans in the Pacific Northwest, including a number within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Kilmer Q2: How is USFWS working with the National Marine Fisheries Services to quickly address this backlog and reduce the risk of litigation?

Answer: The Service works with NOAA Fisheries to comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for National Fish Hatcheries. Currently, the Pacific Region's National Fish Hatcheries have 19 programs requiring ESA coverage. All Service programs have submitted Hatchery Genetic Management Plans (HGMP) to NOAA Fisheries.

Kilmer Q3: What role does fish mass marking play in ensuring that the federal government is meeting its obligations under the Endangered Species Act?

Answer: Mass marking of salmon and steelhead is an important tool used for fisheries management in the Pacific Northwest. Marking and tagging of hatchery fish is essential for monitoring and evaluating hatchery programs; to differentiate between wild and hatchery fish; for setting and implementing harvest objectives for hatchery fish; for determining harvest allocations internationally, domestically, and between Treaty Tribes; and in assuring ESA compliance.

Gray Wolves

In Washington State wolf populations are reportedly on a trajectory to meet their state recovery goals in the next few years.

Kilmer Q4: What are your plans to match the federal listing efforts with the state listing efforts relative to the status of wolf populations and wolf recovery in Washington State?

Answer: In 2011, following the successful recovery and delisting of the Northern Rocky Mountain (NRM) gray wolf population, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) assumed management responsibility of gray wolves in the eastern third of the State. Under State management, the NRM wolf population has continued to thrive and expand across the original NRM boundary into portions of eastern Washington where gray wolves remain federally listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Three wolf packs currently reside in the federally listed area. The WDFW is leading monitoring efforts in order to maintain consistency across the State. The Service is currently working with WDFW to develop a coordination strategy that identifies roles and responsibilities of the Service, WDFW, and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services regarding gray wolf management in areas of Washington where wolves remain listed under the ESA. The strategy describes how these agencies plan to coordinate when responding to gray wolf activity and follows the Washington Wolf Conservation and Management Plan where applicable. The Service anticipates implementing the strategy this spring.

In addition, on June 13, 2013, the Service published a proposal to remove gray wolves from the endangered species list. The Service is currently evaluating public comments on the proposal in the context of the current legal status of gray wolves under the ESA as the Service charts a path forward with regard to any future action that would affect the legal status of gray wolves in the contiguous United States. In the meantime, the Service will continue to work closely with WDFW to monitor and manage wolves in a responsible manner, using the best available science.

Kilmer Q5: What options does a state have under the Endangered Species Act for primary responsibility over a federally listed species being delegated to them by the USFWS?

Answer: Section 6 of the ESA provides a mechanism for cooperation between the Service and the States for conserving threatened, endangered, and candidate species. Under section 6, the Federal agencies are authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with States that establish and maintain an "adequate and active" program for the conservation of endangered and threatened species of fish and wildlife and plants that are resident in the States. Once a State enters into such an agreement, the Federal agencies are authorized to assist in, and provide Federal funding for, the implementation of a State's conservation program.

The Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Program provided grants to States and Tribes for livestock producers conducting proactive, non-lethal activities to reduce the risk of livestock loss due to predation. The President's budget would discontinue this funding, maintaining that other programs are better suited to deliver this funding.

Kilmer Q6: How would the proposed defunding of this program affect the ability of states and tribes to support proactive, non-lethal management activities to reduce the risk of livestock loss?

Answer: The Service understands the concerns of States and Tribes about the risk of livestock loss due to wolf predation, which the Wolf Livestock Demonstration Project Grant Program

(WLDPGP) was authorized to address. However, the Service believes that the compensation portion of the program is duplicative given existing Federal programs and that the WLDPGP would be best implemented, without diminution of support to the States and tribes, by an agency that oversees both the prevention and compensation components of the program.

In the State of Washington, significant efforts are underway on the State and Federal levels to address proactive wolf management. The State Legislature has recognized the importance of an adequate wolf management program and has provided significant funding and staffing over the last several years. In addition, the Service has provided staff resources to support the State's management efforts, which include proactive, non-lethal activities to reduce the risk of livestock loss due to predation. The Service is also actively working with WDFW to develop improved protocols for quick and effective responses to depredation events.

The loss compensation component of WLDPGP is directly duplicative of USDA's Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), which compensates livestock producers for deaths due to animals protected by Federal law, including wolves. Under LIP, producers are eligible for 75 percent of the market value of each animal killed. Having a loss compensation program at the Service when such a program already exists at USDA is duplicative.

Questions from Mr. Israel**Wildlife Trafficking**

I know there have been some issues with musicians travelling with instruments that contain either ivory or other protected species.

Israel Q1: What is the Fish and Wildlife Service doing to make sure our efforts to stifle trafficking are not also stifling cultural exchange?

Answer: The Service continues to work closely with museums to help them understand the requirements for import/export of cultural objects containing protected species, and with musicians, musical instrument manufacturers, orchestras, and other groups to help them understand the requirements for traveling abroad with an instrument containing elephant ivory or other protected species. The Service have met with stakeholders and developed outreach materials, available on the Service's website (<http://www.fws.gov/international/permits/by-activity/musical-instruments.html>) for musicians and musical instrument manufacturers.

Israel Q2: Could an exemption be put in place for musicians traveling from abroad?

Answer: U.S. and foreign musicians traveling with instruments containing protected species must meet the requirements of CITES and the ESA. To help ease the paperwork burden on musicians traveling with musical instruments made from CITES-listed species, the U. S. put forward a proposal at the most recent meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES to implement a passport program that would facilitate the frequent non-commercial, cross-border movement of musical instruments for personal use (including performance, display, competition, etc.) with the issuance of just one document. The U. S. has been issuing these musical instrument "passports" since 2014 to facilitate travel abroad by musicians with their instruments that contain material from protected species. The Service have issued over 60 CITES musical instrument certificates since these documents were developed in 2014.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2015.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

WITNESSES

JONATHAN JARVIS, DIRECTOR

BRUCE SHEAFFER, COMPTROLLER

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN CALVERT

Mr. CALVERT. The Committee will come to order.

Director Jarvis, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing, along with our good friend, Bruce Sheaffer. This morning's hearing will address the important work of the National Park Service and its budget priorities for fiscal year 2016.

Let me begin by stating the obvious: Everybody loves our national parks. Last year's visitation numbers tell the story. The National Park Service recently announced that it had 293 million recreational visitors in 2014—the highest annual total in its 100-year history. That is an increase of 19 million visits from the year before. So more folks are visiting our national parks, many from other countries, and that trend will likely continue as the Service prepares to celebrate its 100th anniversary, or Centennial, in 2016.

As you know, our subcommittee worked very hard on a bipartisan basis to provide funding to the Park Service at the request level in the enacted fiscal year 2015 appropriation bill. Overall, the proposed funding level in your fiscal year 2016 budget request is \$3 billion, which is \$433 million, or 17 percent, above the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. The largest increase—about \$326 million in discretionary funding—is proposed for the Centennial of the National Park Service. We look forward to hearing about the Service's plans for celebrating its 100th anniversary and receiving more details on the role Park Service partners and the private sector will play in this effort.

As part of the Centennial Initiative, the budget request recognizes the critical need to address deferred maintenance across the Service, which now exceeds \$11 billion. The request proposes sizeable funding increases for deferred maintenance needs in both the operations account and the construction account. We look forward to hearing your specific plans for reducing the maintenance backlog in a meaningful way.

Also worth noting is the proposed expansion of the so-called Centennial Challenge, which leverages federal dollars with private sector dollars through at least a one-to-one matching of funds. Congress provided \$10 million for the Centennial Challenge in fiscal year 2015 and the Administration proposes to increase the Federal share to \$50 million in fiscal year 2016. While your budget request includes funding increases for these and other notable programs

and priorities, I need to point out that, again this year, we are operating in a very constrained funding environment.

Like proposed budgets for other bureaus and agencies that have testified recently, this request for the National Park Service raises expectations that will be very challenging, if not impossible, to meet unless something happens between now and—again, I remind those attending today's hearing that several years ago the President and Congress agreed upon statutory spending caps through the Budget Control Act. Those caps remain the law of the land, and the Appropriations Committee is bound by them. So, while a 17 percent increase for the Park Service may sound appealing, the fact is, it is not a realistic outcome as long as we are bound by the current spending caps.

We will do our very best to address the Service's highest priority needs, but any increases above last year's enacted level will likely have to be offset someplace else in this bill. We welcome any ideas you have on how to pay for some of the proposed increases within your request.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to personally recognize our supporting witness, our friend, Bruce Sheaffer, who is retiring after all these years. For those of you who do not know him personally, Bruce has been an outstanding public servant for 44 years, all of them with the National Park Service. In 1987, Bruce became the first, and until now, the only Comptroller of the National Park Service. He has appeared as a witness before this subcommittee on many occasions and has provided invaluable counsel to the bipartisan Members and staff of this subcommittee over the years. Bruce, we have all benefited from your creative problem solving, your knowledge of appropriations law, and your sense of humor. In this business, you need a sense of humor. The subcommittee is grateful for your service and we salute you. So thank you very much. Give him a big hand. And I know you will not be a stranger.

Director Jarvis, today's hearing is the beginning of a very important conversation about the Service's funding priorities. We look forward to hearing from you on these and other issues.

Mr. CALVERT. But first, let me yield to our subcommittee's ranking member, who is Irish, Ms. McCollum, for any opening remarks she would like to share with us this morning.

OPENING REMARKS OF MS. MCCOLLUM

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Jarvis, you wear green all the time but it looks especially great on you today. So thank you for being here this afternoon.

I also want to welcome the National Park Service Comptroller, Bruce. Retirement after 44 years, wow, with the agency, 30 of them as the Comptroller. So that speaks to your knowledge, as the chairman pointed out. Your departure date has not yet been finalized but I along with the chairman and many, many committee staff over the years who have worked with you, we want to thank you for your service, and we just wish you all the very best.

Mr. SHEAFFER. Thank you very much.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Director Jarvis, as head of the National Park Service, I think you have one of the best jobs in government. I real-

ly do. But with that comes a great responsibility of overseeing some of the very best of America's natural and historic treasures.

As the 2009 documentary by Ken Burns showed, America's love affair with the national parks is longstanding. But like many of our Nation's best ideas, the development of our national park system was a long and complex undertaking, and that continues even today.

It is easy to forget that many of the beloved national parks we take for granted today like Grand Canyon and Grand Teton were born in controversy. We have the national park system of today because there were people who had the vision and courage to work to set aside these special places and preserve them not only for their current generation but for many generations yet to come.

Our national park system and the responsibility to keep that moving into future generations is a responsibility that falls onto all of us. We are reminded of that responsibility as the national park system prepares to celebrate the Centennial in 2016.

I note that the budget request includes an ambitious proposal to commemorate the Centennial not just with speeches or events but by putting the fiscal resources into the repair, preservation, and public enjoyment of national parks. I am especially interested in youth engagement initiatives to foster in the next generation an understanding and appreciation of our national parks, forest and public lands. Our urban national parks play an important role in these initiatives. National park units like the Saint Croix, the Mississippi Rivers in my district, Gateway in New York, and the Santa Monica Mountains in Los Angeles serve as outdoor classrooms to hundreds of thousands of children.

However, even with this much needed investment, our national parks are still facing the same decade of lost opportunity I have mentioned at several other budget hearings. When adjusted for inflation, this fiscal year 2016 Park budget request is well below, well below what the agency was appropriated in 2005. In fact, for every National Park Service account except for operations, the 2016 request is even less in *nominal* dollars than in the 2005 appropriation. In an example, the 2016 request for the National Park Service construction is nearly \$57 million less than what was appropriated in 2005. With the diminished investments in construction and repair, the maintenance backlog continues to grow.

Caring for our national treasures is an ongoing responsibility and the American people are looking to all of us to make the investments to protect and preserve them for the next 100 years and beyond.

I want to see the National Park Service get all the resources it needs to carry out that important work, but in a climate of squeezed spending allocations, achieving that will be difficult, as the chair pointed out.

However, the President has laid out a plan to move beyond the harmful budget caps of the Budget Control Act, and I hope my colleagues can move in that direction as well.

Director Jarvis, I appreciate the work that you and all the employees of the National Park Service, full time and seasonal, perform every day, every day, to make the legacy of the national park

system a reality not only for this generation but future generations, and I look forward to your testimony. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

We are quickly approaching an important milestone—oh, I am sorry. Excuse me. I was going right into questions.

OPENING REMARKS OF DIRECTOR JARVIS

Director, you are recognized.

Mr. JARVIS. Thanks, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. Thanks for the opportunity to present the 2016 budget request of the National Park Service, and thanks for the shout-out to Bruce as well. He has been a great mentor of mine as well.

First, I want to thank you for supporting the Centennial Initiative in 2015. With that funding, we are addressing deferred maintenance, volunteers, hiring seasonals, and partnering with our Centennial Challenge.

The men and the women of the National Park Service and our partners are doing everything we can to prepare for the Centennial. Among our many efforts, we are working with the National Park Foundation to leverage the interest of major corporate partners in supporting the parks and this anniversary. The Foundation is about to launch a marketing campaign to engage a new generation in the national parks. Their efforts and ours will draw new visitors, especially the millennials and their young families. We are already seeing this growth. As you mentioned, visitation grew by almost 20 million to 292 million last year.

In addition to these visits that provide educational and recreational opportunities, in 2013 they drove \$26 billion in economic impacts supported by hundreds of thousands of jobs around the country.

I have also authorized Parks to consider increasing fees, which would be the first increases since 2008. We currently collect around \$180 million in fee revenue annually, and the proposed increases would bring in another \$45 million, which would help us address our maintenance backlog.

So today I am here to testify on our budget request, which reflects the federal investment side needed to prepare for the second century.

The highlight is the Centennial Initiative with a \$326 million discretionary increase and a \$500 million mandatory proposal. Now, I recognize this is a significant ask in this budget climate. However, the majority of the funding is to address the deferred maintenance backlog of our highest priority non-transportation assets; structures like Independence Hall and the trails of Yosemite's Mariposa Grove. I know it is not flashy but it is absolutely critical.

When our visitors arrive, excited to help usher in a new century of America's best idea, we cannot greet them with failing facilities. Our projects may not seem all that inspiring, but if we do not fix the wastewater systems at Yosemite, Grand Canyon and Mesa Verde, or the seismic and fire safety issues of the lodges in Yellowstone and Glacier or fix the electrical systems at Gateway and Bandelier, we are putting both resources and visitors at risk in our second century.

You have asked this of me many times, and the Centennial request is what we need to address the problem. A discretionary increase of \$243 million and the mandatory proposal for \$300 million annually for 3 years, if we were to achieve this fully funded over a 10-year period, we could bring our high-priority, non-transportation assets to good condition.

The Centennial Initiative also includes \$8 million to hire more seasonal rangers for our growing number of visitors. As we engage in the next generation, we want to greet them with rangers in flat hats ready to answer questions, lead guided hikes and keep the visitor centers, campgrounds, trails open, clean and safe.

The National Park System continues to evolve so the initiative includes \$13 million for critical responsibilities, including the new parks in the December National Defense Authorization Act. The Centennial includes \$2 million for volunteer coordinators and \$20 million to support the Every Kid in a Park Initiative. These funds would help get every fourth grader and their family into a park including one million students from Title I urban elementary schools. This would expose Americans of every background to their shared cultural and natural heritage.

Finally, the Centennial Initiative includes a discretionary budget of \$50 million for the Centennial Challenge as well as a mandatory proposal for \$100 million over 3 years. This innovative program provides the visible federal match to leverage major partner donations from friends groups and the National Park Foundation for signature projects. We are currently reviewing the projects for the 10 million that you supported in 2015, and we have over 200 requests in for that, all at a minimum of one to one, many of them much more than that.

The 2016 budget also proposes \$50 million for a Civil Rights Initiative. This is \$7 million to support park operations and projects at parks that tell the civil rights story, \$10 million for construction projects, and \$33 million in Historic Preservation Fund for grants for sites and stories around the struggle for civil rights.

And then last but not least are the fixed costs of \$27 million and \$16 million for seasonal health insurance to maintain stable park operations.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my summary and I would be glad to answer any questions.

[The statement of Jonathan Jarvis follows:]

STATEMENT OF JONATHAN B. JARVIS, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES OF THE HOUSE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE FISCAL YEAR 2016 BUDGET
REQUEST FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

March 17, 2015

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today at this hearing on the 2016 President's budget request for the National Park Service (NPS).

NPS Centennial

In 2016, the NPS will celebrate 100 years as the steward of the nation's most cherished natural and cultural resources. The NPS is actively preparing for its second century of operations, and working hard to inspire the next generation of park stewards to experience and value their public lands. Our efforts will draw new visitors, especially millennials and young families, to experience the national parks; we're already seeing this growth, as 2014 visitation grew to 292 million, from 273 million in 2013. These visits do more than provide inspirational, educational and recreational opportunities; in 2013, they drove \$26.5 billion in economic impact, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs in communities around the country.

In addition to our signature Centennial plan, *A Call to Action*, the NPS, in partnership with the National Park Foundation, is preparing to launch a campaign to engage the next generation and a new audience in the life-enhancing and sometimes life-changing experiences to be had at national parks. The NPS is also working with the Foundation to leverage the interest of major corporate partners in engaging with this once in a lifetime anniversary. Finally, to support additional deferred maintenance and other visitor service projects, and only after extensive public engagement efforts, parks are now able to propose changes to their fees. This, in turn, could provide additional support for deferred maintenance projects.

Americans love and are rightly proud of their national parks, but too often they're greeted by facilities in disrepair instead of a seasonal ranger ready to answer their questions. The \$35 million supported by this Committee in the FY 2015 enacted appropriation is already helping the parks get ready; the 2016 budget includes the remaining investments needed for this historic opportunity. The details are discussed below, but to summarize, with full funding for fixed costs and seasonal health insurance, the Centennial initiative request would restore and maintain all highest priority non-transportation assets to good condition over ten years, return seasonal ranger staffing levels to their 2010 peak, support coordination of a growing volunteer force, engage more than 1 million elementary school students, and leverage private sector funds with Federal appropriations in an innovative partnership program to accomplish signature projects at national parks.

2016 Budget Summary

The 2016 budget supports continued stewardship of resources of national significance and the provision of enriching experiences and enjoyment for all visitors. Preparing for a second century of park operations is a key component of the budget. The President's budget will ensure that national parks continue to serve the visitors who come every year to relax and recreate in America's great outdoors and learn about the people and places that make up America's story. The 2016 President's budget request proposes total current appropriations of \$3.0 billion for the NPS. This is a net increase of \$432.9 million above 2015 enacted current appropriations. The request fully funds \$26.7 million in fixed costs and includes a net program increase of \$408.4 million. The budget proposes targeted increases totaling \$420.3 million to fund essential programs and emerging operational needs, including \$326.3 million in current funds to celebrate the Centennial and prepare for our second century. The budget also includes \$12.0 million in reductions in external programs and heritage partnership programs.

The request also includes an estimated \$1.2 billion in mandatory appropriations, a net increase of \$654.1 million. The funds would reduce the deferred maintenance backlog on high priority assets, enhance the NPS' capacity to leverage public/private partnerships, and support land acquisition and grants to state and local governments for recreation. In total, the NPS request includes budget authority of \$4.2 billion.

The highlight of the 2016 budget request is the Centennial initiative, supported by current and mandatory funds. The current request includes a \$326.3 million increase to invest in the second century of the NPS. Of this increase, \$242.8 million will address the deferred maintenance backlog, together with the mandatory proposal discussed below this will provide the NPS the resources to restore and maintain all 6,735 highest priority non-transportation assets in good condition over the next ten years. Other key increases will ensure that NPS operations are prepared for the Centennial; including \$13.5 million to support new parks and critical responsibilities, \$11.5 million to transport more than one million students from Title I elementary schools in urban areas to nearby national parks and \$8.5 million to support park-level youth engagement coordinators to support the President's Every Kid in a Park initiative, \$8.0 million to restore seasonal capacity at parks, and \$2.0 million to support coordination of more than 600,000 volunteers. Additionally, the request includes an increase of \$40.0 million for Centennial Challenge projects and partnerships, leveraging federal funds with partner donations for signature projects and programs at national parks.

The mandatory proposal for the Centennial initiative includes funding of \$300.0 million annually for three years to support Second Century Infrastructure Investment deferred maintenance projects, as well as \$100.0 million annually for three years to provide the Federal match to accomplish Centennial Challenge signature projects at many more park units. NPS would also have the opportunity to compete for funding through the proposed \$100.0 million Public Lands Centennial Fund, a multi-agency program proposed to be managed by the Department and awarded competitively to the NPS, as well as to Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service.

In addition to the Centennial initiative, the 2016 budget proposes \$50.0 million for a Civil Rights initiative to commemorate the Civil Rights Movement, which has inspired many groups in

America and around the world to continue to pursue progress for civil rights. Included within the proposed increases is \$6.0 million to support park cultural resource and education projects; park operations funding of \$1.5 million to address critical needs at park sites associated with civil rights; \$30.0 million in competitive grants and \$2.5 million in grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities to document, interpret, and preserve the stories and sites of the Civil Rights Movement; and \$10.0 million in Construction funds to complete projects at units within the national park system associated with civil rights, such as rehabilitating historic buildings at the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site in Georgia.

Finally, the budget proposes \$4.7 million for projects and activities that are part of the NPS Cultural Resource Challenge, which focuses on the stewardship of America's cultural heritage and builds on key programs to meet the needs and challenges confronting NPS and its partners in the 21st century. Included within the Cultural Resource Challenge is \$3.0 million in park project funds to complete cultural resources baseline documentation to support informed resource management decisions; \$0.7 million to digitize National Register of Historic Places records, improving access to information and reducing the risk of resource damage and loss; and \$1.0 million to provide increased funding for grants to tribes, reflecting the increasing number of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.

Operation of the National Park System

The Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) appropriation funds the operations of our 405 parks and related programs. The 2016 budget proposes ONPS funding at \$2.5 billion, \$239.4 million over 2015 enacted.

The request for operations fully funds fixed costs of \$25.3 million and \$213.4 million in net program increases. These increases are not offset with reductions to park operations.

In addition to the Centennial initiative, Civil Rights initiative, and Cultural Resource Challenge current proposals previously discussed, \$16.3 million is requested to provide federal employee health benefits to newly eligible employees, in compliance with the Office of Personnel Management's 2014 decision expanding availability of Federal Employee Health Benefits coverage for certain employees on temporary appointments and seasonal schedules and allowing for the same government contribution as for full-time permanent employees during the period of coverage. The request reflects the amount necessary to fund this new requirement in FY 2016.

Additionally, an increase of \$1.3 million would support ocean and coastal resource stewardship, and \$1.2 million would support coordinated, science-based response to proposed energy development near park lands. The budget includes requests of \$3.5 million to implement climate change adaptation projects at parks, and \$10.0 million to support challenge cost share climate change resiliency projects conducted with non-Federal partners at parks. Finally, the operations account includes a reduction of \$2.2 million for the elimination of the National Capital Performing Arts Program.

Centennial Challenge

The 2016 budget proposes an additional \$40.0 million for this matching program, for a total proposed current funding level of \$50.0 million. Funding would provide the Federal match to

leverage partner donations at least one to one for signature projects and programs at national parks in celebration and support of the 100th anniversary. This program is further bolstered by the Administration's mandatory proposal to fund an additional \$100.0 million a year for three years. In 2008 and 2010, the NPS leveraged private donations more than one to one, with some projects leveraging a three to one match.

National Recreation and Preservation

The National Recreation and Preservation appropriation funds programs that support local and community efforts to preserve natural and cultural resources. The 2016 budget includes \$54.2 million, reflecting increased fixed costs of \$506,000, a transfer of \$650,000 to the ONPS account, an increase of \$703,000 for digitization of the National Register of Historic Places, an increase of \$260,000 to support the Federal Lands to Parks program, and a reduction of \$9.7 million for National Heritage Areas (NHAs) commissions and grants, a net change of \$8.9 million below 2015 enacted.

The budget provides \$10.2 million for the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program, which assists communities in implementing their own vision of livability, sustainability, and responsibility, and assists partners in successfully utilizing the array of resources and tools available through Federal agencies and nongovernmental groups. The RTCA helps promote the values of health, conservation, and enjoyment of our Nation's resources with a valuable return on investment through on-the-ground projects, such as river restoration and the creation of walking and biking trails. The budget also sustains funding for American Battlefield Protection Program Assistance (ABPPA) grants at \$1.2 million, which provide grants to partners for the preservation of threatened historic battlefields not on NPS lands. Both the RTCA and ABPPA programs are key components of the America's Great Outdoors initiative.

Historic Preservation Fund

The Historic Preservation Fund appropriation supports Historic Preservation Offices in states, territories, and tribal lands for the preservation of historically and culturally significant sites and to carry out other responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act. For 2016, the budget requests \$89.9 million, an increase of \$33.5 million from 2015 enacted. The request provides \$46.9 million for Grants-in-Aid to States and Territories, level with 2015 enacted; an increase of \$1.0 million to Grants-in-Aid to Tribes for a total of nearly \$10.0 million; an increase of \$2.5 million for Grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); and an increase of \$30.0 million to Competitive Grants for a total of \$30.5 million. The newly proposed Grants to HBCUs would support preserving the sites and stories of the Civil Rights Movement, as discussed above, as would \$30.0 million of the competitive grants. The remaining \$0.5 million of the competitive grants would support grants to underrepresented communities, as established in 2014.

Construction

The budget proposes \$251.0 million for Construction, reflecting increased fixed costs of \$710,000 and a net programmatic increase of \$111.9 million, for a total change of \$112.6 million above 2015 levels.

The \$111.9 million in targeted increases supports the Centennial initiative. Line Item Construction is funded at \$153.3 million, a \$91.7 million increase from 2015 enacted, providing funding to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog on the highest priority non-transportation assets. Complementary increases of \$9.3 million for Construction Planning, \$4.6 million for Denver Service Center operations, and \$6.4 million for Regional Facility Project Support would ensure capacity and ability to implement the proposed projects. Of the increases noted above, \$10.0 million of the proposed funding will also support the Civil Rights initiative, completing high priority projects at NPS sites related to the Civil Rights Movement, including facilities at the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail.

As discussed above, the Centennial initiative's proposed efforts on deferred maintenance—current and mandatory—would allow NPS to ensure all 6,735 highest priority non-transportation assets are restored and maintained in good condition over 10 years.

Land Acquisition and State Assistance

The budget proposes full funding for programs funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, totaling \$900.0 million in current and mandatory funding for the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture in FY 2016, and proposes to permanently authorize \$900.0 million in annual mandatory funding beginning in FY 2017. For NPS, the 2016 budget proposes \$117.5 million for current Federal Land Acquisition and State Conservation Grants, a net increase of \$18.5 million from the 2015 enacted level. Of the total amount, \$64.3 million is proposed for Federal Land Acquisition projects and administration, a programmatic increase of \$13.3 million compared to 2015 enacted. This includes increases of \$11.3 million for high-priority land acquisition projects and \$2.0 million for projects to support recreational access to public lands. A total of \$53.2 million is proposed for State Conservation Grants and administration, a programmatic increase of \$5.0 million compared to 2015 enacted. This is comprised of a \$3.0 million increase for traditional State Conservation Grants and a \$2.0 million increase for Competitive State Conservation Grants.

Mandatory Proposals

As noted above, the budget proposes \$100.0 million annually for three years for Centennial Challenge projects (in addition to the proposed \$50.0 million in current funds), and \$300.0 million annually for three years for Second Century Infrastructure Investment (in addition to the proposed current infrastructure increases in the ONPS and Construction accounts).

Additionally, the budget includes a proposal for mandatory LWCF funding, of which \$178.7 million is proposed for the NPS in 2016. Of this amount, \$106.7 million is for Federal Land Acquisition and \$47.0 million is for State Conservation Grants. The remaining \$25.0 million would provide funds to re-establish the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR) grants program, providing competitive grants to rehabilitate and improve existing indoor and outdoor recreation facilities in urban communities. Program efforts would align with the America's Great Outdoors goal of creating and enhancing a new generation of safe, clean, and accessible urban parks and community green spaces. Projects would focus on connecting and engaging communities, especially young people, to their neighborhood parks and would include objectives to directly engage underserved populations, renewing an emphasis on improving recreation services to inner-city minority and low-to-moderate income populations and communities.

Planning and Performance Integration

In formulating the 2016 budget request, the NPS used a variety of tools to incorporate performance results and other information into the decision-making process. These tools include the Budget Cost Projection Module, the Business Planning initiative, and the NPS Scorecard, as well as continued program evaluations. These tools are used to develop a more consistent approach to integrating budget and performance across the NPS, as well as to support further accountability for budget performance integration at all levels of the organization. The 2016 budget reflects the priorities of the NPS as the primary agency promoting both conservation and recreation for every citizen and visitor to enjoy.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my summary of the 2016 budget request for the National Park Service. We would be pleased to answer any questions you or the other members of the subcommittee may have.

Jonathan B. Jarvis

Director, National Park Service



Jonathan B. Jarvis began his career with the National Park Service in 1976 as a seasonal interpreter in Washington, D.C. Today, he manages that agency whose mission is to preserve America's most treasured landscapes and cultural icons.

Jarvis's 37-year career has taken him from ranger to resource management specialist to park biologist to superintendent of parks such as Craters of the Moon, North Cascades, Wrangell-St. Elias, and Mount Rainier. Before being confirmed as the 18th Director of the National Park Service on September 24, 2009, Jarvis served as regional director of the bureau's Pacific West Region.

Today, he is responsible for overseeing an agency with more than 22,000 employees, a \$3 billion budget, and more than 400 national parks that attract more than 290 million visitors every year who generate \$30 billion in economic benefit across the nation.

The National Park Service brings the park idea to virtually every county in America. Grants from the Land and Water Conservation and Historic Preservation Fund help communities preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Since 1976, the Service's tax credit program has leveraged more than \$60 billion in private investment in historic preservation to help revitalize downtowns and neighborhoods across the country.

Jarvis has also reinvigorated the National Park Service's role as an international advocate for protected areas and recognized world leader in cultural and natural resource management.

Managing the National Park Service on the eve of its centennial in 2016, Jarvis has focused on several key areas that are critical for the future: enhancing stewardship of the places entrusted to the Service's care; maximizing the educational potential of parks and programs; engaging new generations and audiences, and ensuring the welfare and fulfillment of National Park Service employees.

Jarvis speaks frequently about climate change, sustainability, the outdoors as a source of public health, and the parks as a unifying, inspirational force for the nation. His blueprint for the agency's second century, [A Call to Action](#), calls for innovative, ambitious, yet practical ways to fulfill the National Park Service's promise to America in the 21st century.

From a seasonal interpreter in the year of our nation's bicentennial to the head of an

internationally known institution on the eve of its 100th birthday, Jarvis has gained a thorough knowledge of these great American treasures, the national parks.

“America's National Park System is a gift from past generations to this and succeeding generations,” said Jarvis. “And while the challenges we face today – like climate change, shrinking open space, habitat destruction, non-native species, and air and water pollution – could not have been imagined when this agency was established in 1916, our mission remains the same: to preserve this nation's natural and cultural heritage, unimpaired for the enjoyment of this and future generations.”



Biography
C. Bruce Sheaffer
Comptroller
National Park Service

C. Bruce Sheaffer, a native of Washington, D.C., became the first Comptroller of the National Park Service in 1987. He currently serves as a Special Assistant to the Director.

Mr. Sheaffer oversees all matters relating to the financial programs of the National Park Service. This includes formulating, justifying, and executing the National Park Service yearly budgets that are submitted to OMB and Congress, as well as controlling the accounting and financial reporting system for the Service.

Mr. Sheaffer began his NPS career in 1971 as a program analyst in the WASO Program Coordination and Appraisal Division. His assignments involved special program reviews and studies, project evaluation, and program monitoring. In 1976, Mr. Sheaffer became the Chief of the Program Formulation Branch under the Director of the Office of Programming and Budget. This branch was responsible for all program and budget formulation strategies for the current and future year budgets. In 1978, all program and budget functions in the National Park Service were reorganized into a single Budget Division. Mr. Sheaffer assumed the position of deputy chief of the division as well as Chief of the Budget Formulation Branch. He was selected as the Budget Officer of the National Park Service in 1982.

In 1970, Mr. Sheaffer earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from High Point College in North Carolina and in 1977 he received a Masters degree in Public Financial Management and Budgeting from George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BUDGET PRIORITIES

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. Now I will get into questions.

We are quickly approaching, as we have discussed, the important milestone in the history of our country, the National Park Service celebration of the Service Centennial in the next year, 2016. I mentioned in the opening remarks, unfortunately, the statutory caps that we are operating under and we must—unless there is a change to fund the bills at those numbers.

While there is a great deal of bipartisan support for the Park Service, I think you are if not the most popular agency in the United States government, you are right there on top. Given the caps, it is highly unlikely that this subcommittee will be able to provide the Service the 17 percent increase as the budget request proposes.

So let's assume for a moment that our budget is relatively flat overall and we have to make some hard choices. How would you prioritize those items in the budget request? If you could, summarize your priorities for the Centennial in order of importance to help guide our decision-making.

Mr. JARVIS. Well, you know, it is a Sophie's choice in many cases, but if I had to make the hard choices, which I am sure I will at some point, it is really deferred maintenance and park operations. Those are the number one priorities. That is the bread and butter of the National Park System, and if we do not start addressing the deferred maintenance, this is going to be a very significant problem for the national parks in the future as we are not even staying even with the maintenance backlog. And of course, fixed costs. If you do not cover fixed costs, then we are in a losing phase.

Mr. CALVERT. Could you identify any program or areas within your overall budget that you would be willing to cut beyond what is in the budget request in order to fund Centennial-related programs?

Mr. JARVIS. We are working on addressing some of the backlog by getting rid of assets that are low priority and in poor condition. We are removing some assets that do help reduce the overall backlog. I really do not believe there are any components of our basic operation I could reduce in order to address the needs for the Centennial.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

Mr. CALVERT. Again, assuming a flat budget overall, to help guide our decision-making, how would you prioritize these three buckets of funding in the budget request: cyclical maintenance, repair and rehabilitation, and construction. Which is the most important, and why?

Mr. JARVIS. Well, repair or rehab and cyclic maintenance are sort of the bread and butter of at least basic maintenance and operations. They replace roofs. They replace foundations. They keep the paint on the outside of the buildings. This funding keeps the assets at a current level. Repair/rehab allows us to go in and do actual repairs. We are basically either not doing or doing very, very little new construction including our line-item construction program. It is all basically going in to address these high-priority needs. All

three are critical components and they add together an ability to address the maintenance, so I could not really put one over the other.

Mr. CALVERT. I have a number of questions on this, which I will submit for the record, but I am going to ask one other question on this and then I will send it over to Ms. McCollum.

ESTABLISH NEW UNITS

Should Congress consider placing a moratorium on establishing new Park Service units until the maintenance backlog is reduced?

Mr. JARVIS. Of the units that have been added, seven of them were by Congress, and a few by the President. The way I have been approaching them is absolute minimum necessary responsibility. So for instance, Manhattan Project, which is one that was added in the defense authorization, we are not taking on any liability or physical facilities within the entire park. Basically all of that will remain the responsibility of the Department of Energy. All we are doing is interpretation. We are telling the story of the Manhattan Project. Yes, it increases our operational cost, but not our backlog.

The story of America continues; there are pieces of the American experience that are yet to be told, and so I think this is a very wealthy nation and I would hate to see us decide we are going to stop telling parts of our story for fiscal reasons.

SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL

Mr. CALVERT. Since you brought up Manhattan, as you know, the 9/11 Memorial, which is now entirely funded with private donations—and I know that people have approached you about this on several occasions and I know that we have funded other museums, and I know you put some thought into that. Do you ever foresee some role for the National Park Service at the 9/11 Memorial?

Mr. JARVIS. Well, we have been up there many times and had discussions with the city. That is not all private money. There is a significant amount of city money going into that facility and operations. It is a very expensive operation. The operation of the 9/11 Memorial exceeds the annual operation of Yellowstone, and so if we were to have a role there, we would probably manage it somewhat differently and less expensively.

Mr. CALVERT. As you know, much of that cost is security because it is considered one of the top targets in the country, if in fact we are attacked again, God forbid, but with that, Ms. McCollum.

UNITED STATES PARK POLICE

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Jarvis, I am going to talk about something that there was a bit of a discussion about when I first came on the committee, and then I am going to be submitting more detailed questions for the record. I just want to raise this issue with my colleagues right now, and that is about the needs of the U.S. Park Police Aviation Unit. It is a critical role that the National Park Service plays in the Capital region, and most people do not see it and they do not even know about it. But the range of activities and vital services provided by the U.S. Park Police Aviation Service includes criminal

searches, medical evacuations, air support at public gatherings, escorts for the President of the United States, antiterrorism missions, and I could go on and on. U.S. Park Police have three helicopters, all which have surpassed the Department's own replacement benchmark of 5,000 flight hours. Director Jarvis, I do not think there is any question about the value of this service as provided by the Aviation Unit or the need to maintain their mission-ready capability. However, to me, this is beginning to feel more like a national security issue, not just a Park Service issue. So I would like to invite you to work with us to explore options as we worked previously with some of the planes for the Forest Service with the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security to see if there is a way that we can share the costs of operations, maintenance and replacement. I will be submitting that in more detail, and I was going to try to grab the chairman today, but between our two meetings, I did not have an opportunity. So I apologize for raising this out of the blue, but he was pretty good working with all of us together to come up with some ideas for firefighting, so I hope we can do that here as well.

The question I would like to have you answer for me now is regarding all the Centennial initiatives that are going on. You were talking about repairs and maintaining our national parks, and the increase is there to not only be safe but it is also to enhance a good visitor experience, right? They both go hand in hand. Unfortunately, there is one place where you can safely go on but it is not a very good visitor experience, and that would be the National Park Service Web site. So I would like you to, in a second, tell me whether or not there is any plans to update, refresh, bring to life, resuscitate this Web site.

NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

You have got a lot going on with the National Park Foundation, so if you could, in a nutshell, tell us what happens if Congress does not meet its goal in working with the National Park Foundation, which has a shared goal-setting objective to make all these improvements that you want to see happen? What are some of the other public and private issues and support that is going on? I know at Yellowstone, Andersen Windows has been involved in doing window replacement. Thank you.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WEBSITE

Mr. JARVIS. You noticed our Web site is not very good, and you are right. Even though it is the absolute most popular Web site in all of government and gets millions of hits per day, it still is a pretty weak presentation. It is undergoing major rehab as a part of the Centennial, both from a trip-planning standpoint as well as an access to information that we have but is just very difficult to find on the current Web site. We are redoing the Web site.

In terms of the National Park Foundation, I have made it a major priority of mine to build a foundation that the National Park Service deserves, one that can actually raise significant amounts of money, both privately and corporately, to support the Service and projects and the Centennial. We now have an extraordinary board that represents both Democrats and Republicans, people with

money and people that know people who have money and can open a broad range of doors. For the first time I think in our history, we have arranged at least eight corporate premier sponsors for the National Park Service Centennial that are each in for millions of dollars to support the Centennial through not only direct funding but also leveraging their own marketing capacity, all targeting the millennial generation. We really want to further connect with the 18–35 generation.

Also we are opening doors for individual giving as well, and people like David Rubenstein and others are willing to fund iconic kinds of projects. David, of course, gave us the \$75 million, which you guys matched, for the Washington Monument, and he has done the same again recently for the Arlington House Robert E. Lee Memorial, and I think he will do others. But I am not going to be able to raise philanthropic money to fix the wastewater treatment plant at Yellowstone. That is just not going to happen.

There is a federal responsibility for a lot of these assets. We are going to market the dickens out of the ones that we think we can get private and corporate sponsorship for, but there are some that just do not sell that well. So that is why we are here, for the rest.

Mr. CALVERT. I guess nobody wants a wastewater treatment plant named after them.

Ms. Pingree.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Ms. PINGREE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here and for the great work you do on the part of the Park Service. Of course, we are very proud of our national park in Maine because it is also celebrating its Centennial. I hope you always feel welcome to come and visit the park and see our deferred maintenance projects, which I am sure they talk to you about frequently.

Just a couple of quick things I will throw in. On the Land and Water Conservation program, I am glad to see that two of the projects on the President's list were from Acadia and the Big Six Forest. Do you see strong prospects for further Land and Water Conversation funding in the Northeast region increasing perhaps if Congress acts to reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation force?

And the other thing I just wanted to say, a couple of properties in my district have been designated as National Historic Landmarks by the National Park Service. That is Eagle Island, which is the island where Admiral Robert Perry was located, and then the family homestead of Frances Perkins, who we know as an important Cabinet secretary in the Roosevelt Administration.

Anyway, we are very happy that they are getting their recognition from the Department, and I am saying that I am a little concerned that not enough is being done to preserve and protect, and I think that fits into all your other budget issues. I know State Historic Preservation Offices are doing the best they can but there is never enough funding for those things, and if you would just make a couple of quick comments about those two items.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICES

Mr. JARVIS. Okay. I will start with the second question first.

The State Historic Preservation Offices as well as the designation of these National Historic Landmarks comes out of the Historic Preservation Fund, which is the analog to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Funding comes from the same revenue source, and has been flat for years, and I know state SHPOs have been struggling with that as well. We did target about a half a million dollars of the 2015 budget to identify sites that are representative of the contributions of minorities and women, and this budget has a request for a \$30 million increase in the Historic Preservation Fund, around the civil rights sites of the Nation.

In terms of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, as you know, the Park Service is limited in its application for LWCF to in-holdings to properties that are inside park boundaries, and it has been critically important to protect a lot of America's battlefields and historic sites as well, and there is just a modest request increase in this budget for LWCF.

Ms. PINGREE. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Kilmer, I think we can fit you in before we have to head out to vote.

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK: ELWHA DAM

Mr. KILMER. Thanks, Chairman, I will talk fast.

I want to thank you and the Park Service for the great work on the Lower Elwha Dam removal, which is an amazing science experiment and important for salmon recovery. I understand that the tribe has been working with the Park Service to remove some of the rocky debris below the Elwha Dam site and potential removal of some big boulders at the Glines Dam site because it is inhibiting salmon recovery. Have you been able to learn anything about the nature of that work and what can be done?

Mr. JARVIS. We are still in the evaluation phase with the Army Corps of Engineers about what it would take to actually remove those sort of remnants of the dam removals, and I just want to thank this committee for all the support it did for many, many years in getting those dams down.

TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. KILMER. Amen. I would just offer that I would be happy to work with you and your staff as you navigate that issue.

The other thing I wanted to ask you about is that you have spoken a lot about deferred maintenance and the backlog. As part of that backlog, it appears that roads and transportation needs are a big part of that, and I understand that is a separate funding stream through transportation reauthorization. What does the Administration plan to propose as part of the transportation reauthorization effort to address the incredible backlog of national park roads, bridges and other transportation infrastructure?

Mr. JARVIS. Thank you for that question because, yes, a little over half of the maintenance backlog are transportation assets, roads and bridges, both paved and unpaved roads. For those of you here in Washington, the Arlington Memorial Bridge, it belongs to

the National Park Service. That bridge was a drawbridge and has significantly rusted out, underneath the drawbridge section. We estimate that project to be in excess of \$128 million. So as a part of the transportation request, we are asking for an increase in the Federal Lands Highways program along with a component for large projects like the Memorial Bridge.

Mr. KILMER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. We are going to go into recess for approximately 15 minutes and we will return for a couple more questions. Thank you.

[Recess.]

ENDOWMENT

Mr. CALVERT. Okay. The committee will come back to order.

Director Jarvis, sometime ago we talked about a national Park Service endowment, and obviously everybody on this subcommittee believes that the deferred maintenance challenge must be addressed. Plans must be developed to fund the Service's long-term infrastructure needs. Given the size and scope of the Service's deferred maintenance backlog, it appears that some potentially creative visionary thinking is in order to address the needs beyond just the traditional appropriations process, which obviously does not give you a lot of certainty in your planning process. It is unlikely that the deferred maintenance needs of the Service could ever be adequately addressed using just discretionary funds alone. Recently we had an extended conversation about how large institutions like universities establish endowments to address long-term capital infrastructure needs and some universities have been amazingly successful, like Harvard, Stanford, others in doing so.

Has the Service given any thought to establishing an endowment to address long-term deferred maintenance, and how would it be funded and how would it be used?

Mr. JARVIS. Thank you for that question. Absolutely, this is an area I would love to explore more with you and the Congress about how we structure a viable endowment. As I like to say, the Park Service is a perpetuity organization on an annual appropriation, and there are so many other institutions in the country like universities that are essentially perpetuity organizations and they have large endowments. They have been able to do that in many ways by tapping their alumni, and with 292 million visitors, we have a very large base of alumni in the national parks that we just have not necessarily tapped.

To a certain degree, the Centennial public awareness campaign we will launch in April, is an attempt to tap that resource and get the public to activate everything from individual giving to estate planning to large donations. We would like to work to get legislative establishment of an endowment that could grow in our next century, and there are a variety of ways to feed that endowment. One suggestion, and I will just put this one on the table, is the Golden Age pass, which is \$10 for life. If we could raise that to the America the Beautiful pass price, which is \$80, the delta between the 10 and 80 could go into an endowment for the system.

FEE INCREASE

The other thing we have talked about is our fee program. If we consider the current fee proposals on the table, 45 million or so. We will collect an estimated \$220 million non-appropriated dollars. If that was placed in an interest-bearing account and the interest was spun off into an endowment, it would not be a huge return immediately but over time that could grow to a very significant amount of money. Then using our Foundation and our friends groups to leverage against that for specific donations to the endowment. One more idea is looking at our revenue source from basically the business side of the house of the National Park Service, which is our concessionaires. That is a very lucrative operation but right now under the current legal structure there is very little incentive for the operators to reinvest in the infrastructure of the National Park System. We do not get a very significant return on that investment either, so some rethinking of that in combination as a package, as a Centennial bill that we could get through would be an incredible gift to the Nation.

Mr. CALVERT. I am sure you wish someone had thought of this 100 years ago. We probably would have a lot less problems today.

But as I mentioned in the beginning, you are probably the most popular agency in the U.S. government. I think you and the Marine Corps comes up the top two in various polls over the years. IRS is always in the bottom right next to Congress.

ENDOWMENT

But we would like to help you with that, and I hope you would consider taking that to the authorizing committees of jurisdiction and figure out a way that we can do this and formulate, because I am sure that many people have been successful in life that love the National Park Service that would like to help endow the Park Service. I do not remember right off the top of my head how much money Harvard has in their endowment account.

Mr. JARVIS. Fifty billion, something like that.

Mr. CALVERT. And if you take a standard 3 or 4 percent like you normally would take out of an endowment, that would solve a lot of problems.

Mr. JARVIS. The sheer number just coming into this Administration, there was the Second Century Commission that had Howard Baker and Bennett Johnston and Sandra Day O'Connor and Sally Jewell and a variety of other individuals, and I was sort of staff to them, and they said if there was one thing they could do that 100 years from now people would look back on was the right thing, it was to establish an endowment.

LEWIS AND CLARK TRAIL STUDY

Mr. CALVERT. One other question and then I will turn it over to Betty, and I know that Chairman Rogers is interested in this. In 2008, Congress directed the National Park Service to conduct a study known as the Eastern Legacy Study to determine whether the Lewis and Clark Trail could be extended through several additional states. Funding was appropriated in 2010, and the Service was directed to have the study completed within 3 years. As we sit

here in March of 2015, the Park Service has yet to complete the study, which is now 2 years overdue. Could you please provide us with an update on the status of the Eastern Legacy Study?

Mr. JARVIS. I am not prepared really to answer that one. I do not know its status, but I would be glad to get back to you for the record.

[The information follows:]

LEWIS AND CLARK TRAIL STUDY

On May 8, 2008, Public Law 110-229 was enacted directing the National Park Service to conduct a Special Resource Study to assess the suitability and feasibility of potentially extending the 1978 designated Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail to include "Eastern Legacy" sites and route segments associated with the preparation and return phases of the historic Lewis and Clark "Corps of Discovery" expedition.

The Eastern Legacy study area includes approximately 7,400 miles of potential Trail corridors in fourteen eastern states and the District of Columbia. The study area includes the districts of 69 members of Congress. Each of the 12 National Trails System Act (NTSA) criteria are being applied to each trail segment to determine the suitability, feasibility, and desirability for potentially extending the designated Trail to include "Eastern Legacy" historic sites and route segments. Considerations are being made for current Trail management practices as well as existing and potential challenges and opportunities. The process for confirming the national significance of a national trail extension involves internal agency review, review by the Landmarks Committee, review by the NPS Advisory Board, and approval by the Secretary. During the scoping process there were 12 public meetings.

NPS is developing and vetting findings for significance, feasibility, and suitability analyses in 2015. The study will be released to the public in 2016, and transmitted to Congress after public comments have been incorporated.

Mr. CALVERT. Chairman Rogers is extremely interested in this. I would suggest that we get an answer and explain to the committee why it is overdue and why it is causing such delays, and if you could provide us a projected timeline for completing the project and outline a plan adhering to a timeline, that would be very helpful.

With that, I will turn to Ms. McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Israel is next.

Mr. CALVERT. All right.

Mr. ISRAEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. McCollum.

CIVIL WAR TRUST

Welcome. Two questions for you, one on battlefield protection and preservation, and the other on the sale of souvenirs and goods in our national parks. On battlefield protection, we are this year celebrating the sesquicentennial of the end of the Civil War, and I am curious about your levels of funding for Civil War preservation. We lose about a thousand acres of prime battlefield every day in the United States, I am told. I have worked with the Civil Trust on preserving where we can. Are your levels of funding adequate for preservation, number one? Number two, what kind of relationships and partnerships do you have with other organizations to help leverage these battlefield conservation efforts?

Mr. JARVIS. We have a great relationship with the Civil War Trust. Jim Hightower and their team, we work with them extensively. As you know, they can move more nimbly than we can on opportunistic acquisitions for sites on the Civil War battlefields

that may be under threat for development. We have done some great projects such as the golf course in Gettysburg a few years ago. We would pick that property up using Land and Water Conservation Fund or they pick it up through the American Battlefield grants program. You are right, we are right at the end of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War but we are going to carry on in our responsibilities to protect and interpret these places as well.

Mr. ISRAEL. Thank you.

Mr. JARVIS. The American Battlefield Protection Grants program for fiscal 2016 is \$9 million.

Mr. ISRAEL. Okay. I will just mention, Chairman Calvert and I just traveled to another potential battlefield, Ukraine, last week. I told him the story of how I decided several years ago to create the House Civil War Caucus so that my colleagues and I could pursue the history of the Civil War and go to different battlefields. It was going very well, and I was getting members on both sides of the aisle to sign up until I sat with Ike Skelton, who chaired the Armed Services Committee at the time and on which I served. I said 'Ike, I would like you to be the honorary chairman of the House Civil War Caucus,' and he looked at me and said, 'Israel, I will join your Civil War Caucus when you call it the War of Northern Aggression Caucus'. And that is where we decided it would be called the Congressional Battlefield Caucus, which is a robust group.

AMERICAN-MADE SOUVENIRS

Second question. This has been a pet peeve of mine. At an earlier hearing today, we talked about the Grand Canyon, which I visit there frequently, and I go into the different facilities at the Grand Canyon. I go into the gift shops, souvenir stores, and it really bothers me that when you want to buy a National Park Service calendar, at the back of the calendar it says "Made in China," and when you want to buy a Grand Canyon mug, it is made in China, and if you want to buy a Grand Canyon shirt, it is made in Pakistan. I think it is important for us to have a good balance of trade, but is there more that we can do to encourage American manufacturing and sales of American products in America's parks?

Mr. JARVIS. We actually do have a policy in the National Park Service to purchase and sell local U.S. manufactured goods. The challenge, of course, is so many of the things that visitors desire are just not manufactured in the United States anymore, and we are such a small piece of that market that we probably cannot drive that. But I think if you did notice at the Canyon, there is a great deal of Native American art made by communities in that area. We try to do that across the country. The other thing we are trying to do is to push very hard for locally grown food in all of our restaurants. We are trying to drive it but again, from our concessionaires' standpoint they just cannot get the goods manufactured in the United States.

Mr. ISRAEL. If I can follow up on that Mr. Chairman, I know my time is running out. Are you making an assumption that there is no domestic supply chain for that or have you done an empirical analysis that concludes that there is no domestic supply chain for

printing calendars, or making mugs or tee shirts or things of that nature?

Mr. JARVIS. I have not done an empirical analysis but we are asking and in some cases requiring. So for instance, our cooperating associations print a vast majority of their materials in the United States at U.S. printers, and there is a regrowing of some of these market capability in the United States that was not there before, but I honestly have not done an empirical study on that.

Mr. ISRAEL. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. I just wanted, before I recognize Ms. McCollum, I had four ancestors that fought for the Confederacy. Happily, one survived or I would not be here today.

With that, Ms. McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Well, my Irish family was fighting with the Union. I hope things go well for everyone as we talk about Civil War monuments. Is that what it is called now?

Mr. CALVERT. Battlefield.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Battlefield. We do not even use Civil War. Okay. Well, you know, history is history and sometimes it is painful, but I am glad you are here with us today, Mr. Chair, very, very glad.

I am just going to do a little bit of a redirect on Mr. Jarvis. Sometimes our parks are not all created equal when politics is involved. I know when Voyageurs National Park was being established up in northern Minnesota, the Park Service was very hesitant to even have things available in the shop because people in International Falls at the time—this is about 20 years ago—thought it was going to compete with their ability to sell things because they had people who came up and did tours and things like that. So sometimes you find yourselves in a bit of a dilemma with trying to figure out how to create that balance for what you would sell in a store, and what you have local people do.

CONCESSION FRANCHISE FEES

But I think one of the things that a lot of people would assume is that a lot of that revenue that is generated in the stores, sometimes by a concession or a stay in the park somehow goes back to the overall park system. You had mentioned something about concessionaires. You have hotels, you have restaurants and then you have the memorabilia. Is that negotiated on a park-by-park basis? You can get back to me later on that. How does that work in the big scheme of things because you had mentioned that maybe we need to review and enhance that.

Mr. JARVIS. The private sector side of our visitor facilities, the food and beverage, lodging, guides and outfitters principally are all under concessions contracts under a 1998 law that governs how they are done. They are competitively awarded for generally around 10 years, and they operate within the park exclusively and then they pay back to the Service a franchise fee, which is part of the bidding process. We set a minimum. They meet that or better in the competitive process and then they have the exclusive right to run those food-and-beverage operations over the term of their contract. Roughly the total gross of all that is over a billion dollars nationwide, and we get a return of about \$70 million out of that.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. And then you mentioned the food, beverage and lodge, so if I am in Voyageurs and is that a concession in there for who is selling—

Mr. JARVIS. That is right.

Ms. MCCOLLUM [continuing]. Even though it is not food and beverage and that in there?

Mr. JARVIS. That is right. That would be a concession. In some cases like in the visitor centers, you will see a book sales operation. Those are usually a cooperating association, more of a friends group rather than a concession.

BOTTLED WATER

Mr. CALVERT. While we are on the subject of food and beverage, it is not what you think—I can read her mind—bottled water. In December 2011, the National Park Service issued a policy memorandum 11-03, which authorizes park superintendents to ban bottled water on a park-by-park basis with approval from the regional director. That memorandum requires that proposals for bans be based on a rigorous written impact analysis considering certain specified factors relating to health and safety, waste reduction costs, impacts on concessionaires. The question on this is, despite the requirements of the policy, to date very little information has been made publicly available by the Service and Parks regarding the ban and its impact. So why is that? And can you provide for the record a list of the National Park Service units that have banned the sale of bottled water?

Mr. JARVIS. Yes, actually there have been 19 parks in the system, and I have a list I can provide to the committee of parks that have eliminated disposable water bottles as a part of this process after I issued the memorandum. It does not ban the individuals for bringing in water bottles. If they want to bring in their water bottles, it is fine. It is just that we are not selling the bottles. What we are selling is a reusable bottle, and then we have filling stations.

[The information follows:]

Bottled Water

NPS Policy Memorandum 11-03 regarding Disposable Plastic Water Bottle Recycling and Reduction was published in December of 2011. The policy encourages recycling, reduction, and education regarding disposable waste bottles.

The elimination of plastic water bottles is not mandatory. Individual parks may request approval to discontinue the sale of disposable water bottles at in-park venues. Currently, 19 parks have elected to eliminate plastic bottle sales. Visitors to the parks continue to be free to purchase and bring with them any legal beverages in the packaging material of their choice. Initial feedback from parks suggests that this policy has resulted in less plastic and aluminum garbage and decreased litter in the parks.

Among the 19 parks that have eliminated disposable water bottles, many do not have a concessioner operation at the park. Of those that do, the NPS review of the data leads the NPS to conclude that the concessioners have not suffered a substantial loss in gross sales revenue.

Parks Participating in the Elimination Component of Policy Memorandum 11-03:

Arches National Park
Biscayne National Park
Bryce Canyon National Park
Canyonlands National Park
Cape Hatteras National Seashore
Colorado National Monument
Fort Raleigh National Historic Site
Grand Canyon National Park
Lake Mead National Recreation Area
Mount Rushmore National Monument
Pecos National Historical Park
Petrified Forest National Park
Saguaro National Park
Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument
San Antonio Missions National Historical Park
Timpanogos Cave National Monument
Wind Cave National Park
Wright Brothers National Memorial
Zion National Park

Mr. CALVERT. But many of these 19 areas would sell soda. Do you find any discrepancy there, I mean as far as now that we are obviously as a Nation into healthful food and healthful beverages, not that I am—I do not want to say that soda is unhealthy but some people would say that water is healthier. Do you think there is a little inconsistency here of saying yes to soda and no to water?

Mr. JARVIS. One of the requirements is they must demonstrate there is a number of filling stations available for the public and an inexpensive reusable bottle is available for sale either in the concession or cooperating association. I do not have any evidence that not selling water results in them buying a soda instead. What we are directing is to not add these to the waste stream but to use reusable bottles. And so, out of the 407 parks we have, only 19 have been able to actually do this so far.

Mr. CALVERT. Well, as you know, bottled water is a very popular item nowadays, and I understand that—by the way, there is a Freedom of Information Act appeal involving a request for documents relating to the issue. It has been pending at the Department of Interior for over a year. And some distributors in my district wrote Secretary Jewell expressing concerns about the ban, the delay in responding to the FOIA request. A similar letter was sent to the Service earlier this year. So the question is, why is a delay and when do you expect a response?

Mr. JARVIS. I will have to check on that. I am not sure what the status of that FOIA request is but we will get back to the committee on the details on it.

[The information follows:]

WATER BOTTLE FOIA REQUEST

In November 2013, the National Park Service responded to a FOIA request for records related to implementing a ban or limitations on plastic water bottles. These documents were made publicly available on the NPS FOIA Reading Room website. On December 12, 2013, an appeal was filed requesting more information regarding post-ban analyses and on March 16, 2015 the Department of the Interior's Solicitor's Office granted the appeal. The Solicitor's office remanded the search back to the National Park Service's FOIA officer.

Previously, a similar search conducted for Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) found that parks do not separately report their solid waste based on type (plastic, bottles, paper, etc.) and as such do not have data available to conduct a post-ban analysis. The previous search found that no parks have completed a post-ban analysis. The new search, currently underway, is not generating additional information.

WHITE HOUSE PERIMETER

Mr. CALVERT. One other issue. White House perimeter fence. Obviously the Secret Service has been in the news lately, and a lot of people do not know that you are obviously involved in the protection of the White House to some degree involving Secret Service penetration of the White House fence ongoing but we have yet to be informed of plans to secure and strengthen the White House perimeter, which I understand falls under your jurisdiction, and is the National Park Service involved with the Secret Service to strengthen the White House perimeter?

Mr. JARVIS. Yes, we are. We are currently evaluating three proposals developed through an architecture and engineering firm, three designs for a replacement for the fence that would provide

much greater security but also be compatible with the architecture and history of the White House. We want no compromises on security obviously but this is a new element that we would be adding and obviously a lot of people come to see the White House and take their pictures and things like that. We are working very closely with Secret Service on this.

Mr. CALVERT. And obviously we would like to know what the budget is, the timeline and the process for commencing and completing the project.

Mr. JARVIS. Well, we are hoping the Secret Service will pay for it rather than the Interior.

Mr. CALVERT. They will be lucky to have a budget this year the way they are going.

Ms. McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Just two follow-ups. One, the fence was put up and the Park Service was maintaining the grounds and conducting the tours. That was then and this is now, and so I really do not think it should come out of your budget to replace the fence. If we are looking at more austerity—excuse me, I cannot even say the word, it pains me so much—with what is happening with the budget, I really think we should be looking at Homeland Security, Treasury and other things. That should be part of a cost share on national security, along with what I mentioned about the Park Police's day-to-day role with their three helicopters for providing security and medical evacuations. That is not typically what people think of the Park Service budget.

Mr. Chair, to the issue of the water, Mr. Jarvis is going to get back to you but when bottled water really started taking off, a lot of us noticed. I had constituents contact me, state parks, municipal playgrounds and everything, all of the sudden the drinking water fountains started getting shut off because they were expensive to maintain. It was one way in which the cities and others just kind of figured at public gatherings, you just bring your own water, you bring your own plastic and then you leave your garbage and then the taxpayers pay to haul that off or whatever waste there is. On one hand what you just said about having more water stations available for people to refill water bottles is becoming extraordinarily popular in the airports as they have been putting those out. I think to have that as part of the mix is just fantastic, and I would encourage us to have more opportunities where we have them for the public to be able to access drinking water. We live in a country where we can turn on just about any tap and know we can drink from it safely, and we should celebrate that as a Nation, especially families when they are out enjoying our national parks.

Mr. CALVERT. I am old enough to remember when I first came here in Congress many years ago, they still served water in the pitchers with glasses.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. You know why that stopped. Our water was not safe.

Mr. CALVERT. And maybe there is a little suspicion about quality of water in various parts of the country. I am sure that is not true on national parks.

With that, if there is no further questions, we certainly appreciate your attendance and we appreciate your service to our coun-

try, and Bruce, good luck to you. This is probably your last hearing. You are probably celebrating that.

Mr. SHEAFFER. On some strange level I will miss this.

Mr. CALVERT. A masochist at heart.

Well, we appreciate it. Thank you. We are adjourned.

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing: National Park Service
March 17, 2015
Questions for the Record

Questions from Mr. Calvert

Deferred Maintenance Backlog

Like other members of the subcommittee, I'm very concerned about the growth of the Park Service deferred maintenance backlog. The budget request proposes sizeable increases for deferred maintenance needs including a \$64 million increase for cyclic maintenance and a \$67 million increase for repair and rehabilitation projects. The request also includes a \$112 million increase within the Construction account. With the deferred maintenance backlog now in excess of \$11 billion, these increases are really just a drop in the bucket in terms of overall need.

Calvert Q1: Again, assuming a flat budget overall, to help guide our decision making, how would you prioritize these three buckets of funding in the budget request—cyclic maintenance, repair and rehabilitation, and construction? Which is the most important and why?

Answer: All three fund sources are critical components of the NPS' asset management strategy. Both line item construction and repair and rehabilitation projects reduce deferred maintenance that the NPS has already incurred. Cyclic maintenance funding ensures the NPS completes preventative maintenance on schedule, keeping assets in good or fair condition, and curtailing the continued growth of the deferred maintenance backlog. Without sufficient funding for cyclic maintenance, investments made through line item construction and repair and rehabilitation cannot be sustained.

Calvert Q2: How specifically would the request for the Construction account address the backlog? Please provide specific examples of maintenance backlog projects, why these projects have not been funded to date, and why completing these projects is critical.

Answer: The FY 2016 request for Construction includes discretionary increases of \$91.7 million for Line Item Construction projects, \$20.3 million for the necessary planning and project management activities to support this expanded project workload, and a mandatory proposal for \$300.0 million annually over three years to address the deferred maintenance backlog on the NPS' highest priority non-transportation assets. In concert with the related requests proposed in the Operations account, these funding proposals would allow the NPS over ten years to make targeted, measurable, and quantifiable upgrades to all of its highest priority non-transportation NPS assets and restore and maintain them in good condition.

For example, the FY 2016 Line Item Construction list includes several deferred maintenance projects at Yosemite National Park that are critical to ensuring the protection of resources and visitor access. The first, \$4.9 million for Phase 1 of rehabilitating the El Portal sanitary sewer, will replace 70-year old failing sewer lines to prevent additional sewage spills and groundwater infiltration. The park has been warned by the State of California that future sewage spills carry potential fines between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per day; this would require a shutdown of wastewater flows from Yosemite Valley and Yosemite View Lodge facilities, impacting visitors and revenues for concessioners and partners. The entire \$4.9 million requested would address deferred maintenance needs.

The second project, \$1.7 million to address leaking portions of the water distribution system in the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, would repair and replace more than 9,400 feet of water lines and replace an old water storage tank. The water lines were originally installed in 1932, and the park estimates they leak approximately 39,500 gallons per day of chlorinated water into the Mariposa Grove, home to approximately 500 mature sequoia trees, many of which are more than 2,000 years old. Leaking water pipes affect the natural hydrological flow that is essential to the long-term health of these centuries-old trees. Of the \$1.7 million requested, \$1.5 million would address deferred maintenance, and \$0.2 million would address capital improvement to construct and install a 30,000 gallon water tank.

Calvert Q3: How much of the Construction account budget is to reduce the maintenance backlog, as opposed to new construction that will eventually place pressure upon the maintenance budget?

Answer: The FY 2016 request for Construction is focused on deferred maintenance, and does not propose funding construction of new facilities. Where appropriate, deferred maintenance projects also include capital improvement to address concerns with building, safety, accessibility and health code compliance, as well as energy and sustainability guidelines. The 2016 request for Construction also includes several small projects to demolish and remove excess and failing structures, which are currently contributing to the overall backlog.

Calvert Q4: How much of the Service's maintenance backlog is actually deferred maintenance infrastructure projects within the parks and how much is related to roads maintenance which would be funded largely through the highway bill and other legislative vehicles?

Answer: Of the total \$11.5 billion deferred maintenance backlog as of the end of FY 2014, just under half, or \$5.6 billion, is attributable to paved roads and structures. Projects to restore these transportation assets would be funded largely through the highway bill reauthorization. Under the current transportation authorization, the NPS receives \$240 million annually for its Federal Land Transportation Program.

Calvert Q5: Should Congress consider placing a moratorium on establishing new Park Service units until the maintenance backlog is reduced?

Answer: The mission of the National Park Service is to protect and preserve cultural and natural resources for the enjoyment of the public and future generations. There are many sites currently unprotected and vulnerable to development or degradation that may be as important to our American story as resources already under NPS protection.

Calvert Q6: How much funding is needed above the FY16 budget request in order to reduce the maintenance backlog relative to FY15?

Answer: The FY 2016 request includes a discretionary increase of \$242.8 million, and a mandatory proposal of \$300.0 million annually over three years, to address the deferred maintenance backlog of its highest priority non-transportation assets. Of the more than 75,000 assets in the national park system, the NPS has identified 6,735 of these to be the highest priority non-transportation assets with \$2.2 billion in deferred maintenance. If the FY 2016 request is fully funded, including sufficient funding in future years, these proposals would allow the NPS over ten years to make targeted, measurable, and quantifiable upgrades to all of its highest priority non-transportation NPS assets and restore and maintain them in good condition. While the FY 2016 request does not fully eliminate the entire deferred maintenance backlog, and

in particular does not address any deferred maintenance on transportation assets, it does represent the funding level needs to address the NPS' highest priorities.

Centennial Challenge

The Committee and Congress provided \$10 million in fiscal year 2015 for the so-called “Centennial Challenge.” This program is designed to leverage public/private partnerships through at least a 1-to-1 matching requirement, targeting funds at high priority programs and projects.

Calvert Q7: What is the current status of those fiscal year 2015 funds and what specific projects are being funded? Are you meeting and/or exceeding the 1-to-1 matching requirement?

Answer: The NPS opened its project selection process in early 2015; in less than four weeks, parks submitted more than 200 projects, well exceeding the \$10 million available in FY 2015. Parks were given criteria when applying for projects; for example, the evaluation criteria specified that priority would be given to projects that leverage higher rates of partner contributions and address critical high priority deferred maintenance needs. The NPS will be announcing the selected projects in the coming weeks; the list will demonstrate that the NPS significantly exceeded the 1-to-1 matching requirement. The total project value is estimated at \$26 million, with only \$10 million coming from the federal share, and \$16 million from partner donations. Approximately half the projects exceed the 1:1 match, including several large projects where the match exceeds 3:1.

Calvert Q8: Why is the Administration proposing such a sizeable increase for the Centennial Challenge in fiscal year 2016? Is funding for the Centennial Challenge a higher priority than other Centennial –related priorities within your budget request?

Answer: The Centennial Initiative includes several high priorities; if funded in FY 2016, these strategic investments will pave the way for a strong second century of visitor engagement and stewardship of our nation's natural and cultural heritage. For example, the requested discretionary increase and mandatory proposal for the Centennial Challenge helps the NPS leverage the significant interest in the business and philanthropic community to partner with the NPS on signature projects and programs at national parks. The Centennial is a truly unique opportunity to build these partnerships. Similarly, the requested discretionary increases and mandatory proposal for deferred maintenance would allow the NPS to restore and maintain all its highest-priority non-transportation assets to good condition over ten years. And finally, the Centennial Initiative includes requests to restore seasonal rangers and address new and critical operating needs across the national park system, as well as engage youth and volunteers, ensuring the parks have sufficient capacity to greet new and returning visitors.

However, even in the Centennial year, NPS' highest priority is full funding for fixed costs. Without this funding, parks must absorb these costs in their base budgets, reducing their financial flexibility to meet operational needs.

Chairman Rogers Question/Lewis and Clark Trail study

In 2008, Congress directed the National Park Service to conduct a study—known as the Eastern Legacy Study—to determine whether the Lewis and Clark Trail could be extended through several additional States. Funding was appropriated in 2010 and the Service was directed to have the study completed within three years. As we sit here, in March of 2015, the Park Service has yet to complete the study, which is now two years overdue.

Calvert Q9: Can you provide us with an update on the status of the Eastern Legacy Study?

Answer: On May 8, 2008, Public Law 110-229 was enacted directing the National Park Service to conduct a Special Resource Study to assess the suitability and feasibility of potentially extending the 1978 designated Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail to include "Eastern Legacy" sites and route segments associated with the preparation and return phases of the historic Lewis and Clark "Corps of Discovery" expedition. The NPS is developing and vetting findings for significance, feasibility, and suitability analyses in 2015. The study will be released to the public in 2016, and transmitted to Congress after public comments have been incorporated.

Calvert Q10: Can you explain to this Committee why it is almost two years overdue and what is causing such serious delays?

Answer: The Eastern Legacy study area includes approximately 7,400 miles of potential Trail corridors in fourteen eastern states and the District of Columbia. The study area includes the districts of 69 members of Congress. Each of the 12 National Trails System Act (NTSA) criteria are being applied to each trail segment to determine the suitability, feasibility, and desirability for potentially extending the designated Trail to include "Eastern Legacy" historic sites and route segments. Considerations are being made for current Trail management practices as well as existing and potential challenges and opportunities. During the scoping process there were 12 public meetings. The process for confirming the national significance of a national trail extension involves internal agency review, review by the Landmarks Committee, review by the NPS Advisory Board, and approval by the Secretary.

Calvert Q11: Can you provide us with your projected timeline for completing the project and outline your plan for adhering to this timeline?

Answer: NPS is developing and vetting findings for significance, feasibility and suitability analyses in 2015. The study will be released to the public in 2016, and transmitted to Congress after public comments have been incorporated.

Antiquities Act/National Monument Designations

Two weeks ago, President Obama used authority under the Antiquities Act to establish three new national monuments. He has now used the Antiquities Act 16 times during his presidency to establish national monuments. In my view, some designations may have merit, others may not. However, what's disconcerting to me and many of my colleagues is that the President circumvents an open, public, and transparent process by using the Antiquities Act to make these designations. His actions demonstrate a complete disregard for the role of Congress, affected state and local communities, and the public in making these designations.

Calvert Q12: What is the estimated cost to the National Park Service in fiscal year 2016 to operate and maintain these three new national monuments?

Answer: The NPS will manage two of the three new monuments: Pullman NM and Honouliuli NM. The NPS will conduct a management planning process with full public involvement, and will continue to work in partnership with the many groups that have helped to preserve these sites. However, no new recurring funding will be provided to these units for base operations until appropriated by Congress.

Calvert Q13: Does the Service prepare any cost analysis or estimate of how much it will cost to annually administer or maintain each new national monument *prior* to the White House making announcements of this nature?

Answer: When the NPS conducts a special resource study, it includes analysis of potential costs if added to the national park system. New park units are operated with minimal funding in the early years as management plans are completed and funds are requested and appropriated by Congress. These sites were the subject of significant public involvement and analysis in advance of the national monument designation.

The designation of the new Pullman National Monument in Chicago is strongly supported by Congressional, State and local leaders, community groups and historical organizations as a way to promote historic preservation and generate economic activity. The area was first recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1970. In 2013, the NPS completed a reconnaissance survey of the Pullman Historic District that affirmed the site's national significance. Already, the National Park Foundation has raised nearly \$8 million in support, a testament to the strong support from the Chicago community to tell the story of Pullman through the national park system.

At the new Honouliuli National Monument in Hawaii, Japanese American organizations and elected leaders in Hawaii have strongly supported preserving and interpreting the camp. In 2009, Congress authorized the NPS to conduct a special resource study of the site for possible inclusion in the national park system, and NPS sought public comment during the study. The study determined that the Honouliuli Internment Camp was national significant as well as suitable and feasible for inclusion in the national park system. Local on the ground support has provided additional concrete assistance. For example, the Monsanto Company donated the property to the Federal government, making it possible to establish the monument. The University of Hawaii-West O'ahu is actively involved in research and interpretation of the site and has signed an agreement with the NPS to assure public access over its lands adjacent to the site.

Calvert Q14: How many National Park Service units have been created by executive action or by authority under the Antiquities Act since 2009? How much funding has gone into these units since their creation?

Answer: The following were authorized by Presidential Proclamation since 2009:

Park Unit	Cumulative Operational Funding through FY 2015
Fort Monroe NM	\$1,672,000
Cesar E. Chavez NM	\$709,000
Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers NM	\$389,000
First State NM*	\$414,000
Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad NM	\$374,000
Pullman NM	\$0
Honouliuli NM	\$0

*Subsequently redesignated as the First State National Historical Park by P.L. 113-291.

The Administration believes that local and Congressional input is an important part of the designation process and works closely with local communities and their elected representatives to ensure that the vision and stewardship roles of local stakeholders are understood and respected.

FLREA/Expiration of Recreation Fee Authorization

The Park Service's authority to levy entrance fees through the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) expires at the end of this fiscal year. Your fiscal year 2016 budget request seeks to have this authority extended by another year. We know that this authority—which is also important to the Forest Service and other DOI land management bureaus—is critical to providing revenue to our national parks for maintenance and improving maintenance facilities. The Service has been in a similar position the last several years—facing the expiration of this authority—and the Appropriations Committee has extended the recreation fee authority on an annual basis each of the last two years. This is an area of particular importance to our authorizers, specifically Chairman Bishop and the House Resources Committee.

Calvert Q15: To what extent is the Park Service working with the Resources Committee on a long-term extension of this authority and, if so, what is the status of those efforts?

Answer: The current extension of FLREA is through September 30, 2016. Permanent reauthorization of FLREA will provide an important authority that allows the agencies to continue to effectively serve the visiting public, provide high-quality visitor amenities, and respond quickly to meet changing visitor needs. FLREA provides these important benefits to visitors as a result of the agencies' ability to immediately reinvest recreation fee dollars and use them for site enhancements, resource protection, interpretive programs, visitor safety, and other vital services and improvements. We look forward to working with our sister agencies, Chairman Bishop, and the House Resources Committee on a long term solution.

Calvert Q16: Are you optimistic that the authorizers will pass a rec fee extension this year?

Answer: The NPS looks forward to working with Congress to support an extension of this authority. With respect to a long-term authority, we recommend the Congress permanently authorize this program. Permanent authorization would not preclude Congress from ongoing oversight of the program, and agencies have consistently submitted reports of their activities to Congress.

Calvert Q17: What are the ramifications if this authority is allowed to expire at the end of the fiscal year?

Answer: FLREA is currently authorized through the end of FY 2016. The NPS, and its sister agencies, require this authority a year in advance to avoid complications with selling the annual passes that are valid for one-year from the date of purchase, as well as systems that accept reservation up to one-year in advance. If the authority was allowed to expire, the NPS would see a significant, negative impact to its capacity to complete projects that provide high quality visitor services and programs, improve visitor safety, reduce deferred maintenance, improve accessibility, and facilitate partnerships.

Calvert Q18: How much annual revenue do these entrance fees generate for our national parks? What percentage of these fees does the Service presently use to address deferred maintenance needs?

Answer: The NPS estimates it will collect \$187.9 million in FY 2015, with \$70.0 million, or 37 percent, planned for deferred maintenance. Additionally, the NPS plans to spend another \$14.0 million, or seven percent, on annual maintenance and capital improvements to its assets.

Raising NPS Recreation Fees

The Service has initiated efforts to raise entrance fees (rec fees) that visitors pay to visit our national parks. I understand that these fees have been frozen since 2008.

Calvert Q19: Where are you in this process of determining whether to raise fees? Does the Service raise these fees administratively or is legislation necessary? How is the fee assessed or determined for each Park Service unit? What is the average increase for NPS units?

Answer: Beginning in 2015, parks were authorized to change their recreation fee rates to align with the new Entrance Fee Rate Schedule, after they actively engaged the public and stakeholders about proposed changes and impacts. Parks must document the results of this outreach, which must be considered by the park and approved by the NPS Director to ensure that the fee increases are implemented in a way that works best for parks and visitors. In March 2015, six regions submitted their requests to increase fees in some parks; these requests are currently under review by the Director. FLREA authorizes the NPS to adjust these fees administratively.

Recreation fees are based on the Entrance Fee Rate Schedule, which groups parks into four categories-- Group 1 consists of National Historic Sites, National Military Parks, National Battlefields, National Battlefield Parks, National Memorials/Shrines, National Preserves, and Parkways; Group 2 includes National Seashores, National Recreation Areas, National Monuments, National Lakeshores, and National Historical Parks; and Groups 3 and 4 include National Parks.

Calvert Q20: How much additional revenue do you project would be raised each year through raising these fees? How would these additional revenues generated be used?

Answer: The NPS estimates the new fee rates could raise an additional \$45.0 million annually. The new revenue from the fee increases will help the NPS address maintenance needs for visitor use facilities.

National Mall

The Park Service continues to make considerable investments on the National Mall which attracts millions of visitors each year. The enacted fiscal year 2015 budget contained additional funds for projects on the Mall.

Calvert Q21: Can you give us an update of the projects presently underway on the Mall and their projected completion dates? Are there additional projects the Service will undertake in the near future?

Answer: The FY 2015 appropriation included \$5.0 million to support Phase 3a of the National Mall Rehabilitation project, a multiphase project to install irrigation, drainage, and water collection system, and re-landscape the National Mall. Phase 1 (improvements between 3rd and 7th streets) is complete; Phase 2 (between 7th and 12th streets) is approximately 20 percent complete, and is expected to be complete by spring 2016. The contract for Phase 3a (between 12th and 14th streets) has been awarded. The FY 2016 President's Budget Request includes \$5.2 million to complete this project; if enacted, the project should be completed by January 2017, in time for the 2017 Inauguration.

The FY 2016 President's Budget Request for Line Item Construction includes several other projects on the National Mall, including \$11.2 million to rehabilitate the water conveyance systems for emergency and potable water supplies in Potomac Park, and \$2.5 million to upgrade the accessibility of the Lincoln

Memorial spaces, restrooms and pathways. The NPS is working with the Department of Energy to improve the efficiency of lighting at several memorials, and working with non-federal partners on several projects. These include the construction of the Vietnam Memorial Education Center, which will be done in partnership with the Vietnam Veteran's Fund, and rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens, with the Trust for the National Mall.

The Constitution Gardens project development also included design for the landscaping and sidewalk south of the 17th St levee. The levee was completed in fall 2014; the landscaping and sidewalk will be completed in spring 2015. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is under contract to complete certification of the closure structure, which is anticipated to take one year. Following certification, the Federal Emergency Management Agency will redraw flood maps so that areas protected by the levee system will no longer be considered to be within the 100-year floodplain.

Reimbursing States for Government Shutdown Costs

During the 2013 government shutdown, six states entered into an agreement with the Service to use State funds to reopen park units. My understanding is that these States provided almost \$4 million to these units for a period of one to six days. In total, 13 units were re-opened: Statue of Liberty (NY); Grand Canyon (AZ); Mount Rushmore (SD); Great Smokies (TN); Rocky Mountain (CO) and eight units in Utah (Arches, Bryce, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, Cedar Breaks, Glen Canyon, Natural Bridges, and Zion).

Calvert Q22: Did the Park Service use all of the funds collected by the States to re-open these parks? What did the Service do with any unspent State funds?

Answer: Six states donated a total of \$3.6 million, and re-opened parks for a period of 1 to 6 days. After the government reopened on October 17, the NPS returned \$1.6 million in unspent funds.

Calvert Q23: What specifically was the agreement signed between the States and the Service? In your view, does the Park Service have an obligation to repay States for the cost of operating these park units during the shutdown? What would be the impact, if any, if the Service reimbursed the States for funds donated?

Answer: During the 2013 government shutdown, six states entered into a donation agreement with the NPS to reopen park units. Each agreement stipulated: "Unless the United States Congress appropriates funds and expressly authorizing the NPS to reimburse the State for State-donated funds previously obligated or expended by the NPS, the NPS will not reimburse the State for such previously obligated or expended funds." Legislation has been re-introduced in the 114th Congress directing the NPS to repay States for the donated funds. This bill includes a provision directing the NPS to repay States from future appropriations; if enacted, this would require cuts to future park operations to make the payment unless additional funding was provided specifically for this purpose. Impacts to park operations will be diminished if the NPS is authorized to use all available fund sources, including prior year appropriations.

Calvert Q24: Weren't Park Service employees paid whether these park units were open or not? Did the \$4 million from the States pay for these employees? If so, what did you do with the Federal funds appropriated for these same salaries and expenses?

Answer: The NPS expended approximately \$2 million of the donated funds to re-open parks, including the costs of salaries only for employees who worked at those parks when they were re-opened during the shutdown. The unused portion of donated funds - \$1.6 million - was returned to the States. Following the

16 day shutdown, furloughed employees were ultimately paid for the time they were prohibited from working; these payments were not made from State donations. When Congress appropriated FY 2014 funding, it decreased funding for the Park Management activity within the NPS Operating account relative to FY 2012 levels and additionally directed the NPS to fund priorities such as \$2 million for quagga mussels and \$3 million for white nose bat syndrome within these funds.

National Mall/Smithsonian Folklife Festival

Last year, we discussed at some length ongoing negotiations between the Park Service and the Smithsonian on the use of the turf panels on the National Mall for the Smithsonian's annual Folklife Festival. At that time, some disagreements existed over the location of the event based on ongoing turf repair on the Mall and concerns about potential damage to newly restored turf panels. I recall that the Smithsonian was particularly concerned that new Park Service policies would prevent them from holding their annual Folklife Festival in a manner consistent with previous years.

Calvert Q25: Have the Service and the Smithsonian now resolved these differences? What is the current state of play with regard to the Folklife Festival?

Answer: The National Park Service (NPS) and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (SCFCH) have agreed upon a strategy that will allow the Folklife Festival to continue on the National Mall while still protecting the investments made to rehabilitate the landscape. After several preliminary meetings and the subsequent signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the SCFCH and the National Mall and Memorial Parks, planning has commenced for the 2015 Folklife Festival. On May 30, 2014, SCFCH submitted an application for a permit for the use of the Mall panels between 3rd and 4th Streets. The SCFCH then expanded their request to include the use of portions of Jefferson and Madison Drives, to which the NPS has provided a tentative approval. A permit will be issued to the SCFCH for this year's 2015 Folklife Festival, and there continue to be ongoing logistical planning meetings.

Calvert Q26: What is the Service doing to strike a reasonable balance between use and preservation on the National Mall?

Answer: During the ongoing rehabilitation of the National Mall, NPS took a number of steps to protect the Mall, including limiting the size and scope of certain events. Once the rehabilitation of the Mall and all turf panels is complete, there will be an increase in hardscapes, which will be available for events. The Mall rehabilitation included the construction of larger gravel walkways to allow for relocation of events off the turf, which will allow event use to grow without impacting the resource. The NPS has also developed best management practices which will allow for use of the grass panels while not incurring damage.

Everglades Restoration/Tamiami Trail Bridging Project

As you know, the Florida congressional delegation, along with many other House Members, remains very interested in the Everglades Restoration effort, including the bridging project along the Tamiami Trail. While there is funding for ongoing Everglades restoration work in your budget request, funding for this bridging project is not in the fiscal year 2016 budget request.

Calvert Q27: Can you provide the subcommittee with an update on Everglades restoration efforts, as well as the current status of the Tamiami Trail project?

Answer: The NPS has supported completion or advancement of several key projects, which will help to restore critical flows to Everglades National Park and coastal estuaries, restore habitat, and increase flood protection and water supplies for environmental and urban use. As part of the Modified Water Deliveries Project, construction was completed in January 2014 on the 1-mile bridging and road raising of Tamiami Trail. By the second quarter of 2016, the “8.5 Square Mile Area” component of the project, which provides flood protection to Miami-Dade county residents living on the outskirts of the park, will be completed. Furthermore, NPS is moving forward with acquiring the last real estate interests required to fully operate the Modified Water Deliveries Project consistent with the Corps of Engineers, timeline and real estate requirements for phasing up to full operation.

As part of the ‘Next Steps’ for the Tamiami Trail project, the NPS and FDOT will build a second bridge, nearly 2.5 miles long at Shark River Slough, which historically carried large volumes of water into the Park. The current cost estimate of the bridge project is \$144 million. The State of Florida has committed to match federal funds, up to \$90 million; the NPS commitment is \$72 million, or half the cost estimate.

Congress appropriated \$7.5 million to the NPS Construction account in FY 2014, and the NPS subsequently transferred that amount to the State in FY 2014. Working with the NPS, the State received a \$20 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation in late 2014. This grant is included as part of the federal share. To complete its first \$30 million commitment, the NPS will also provide \$2.5 million from its 2015 Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) allocation.

Calvert Q28: When will the next phase of construction begin? What is the proposed Federal government role in providing additional transportation funding in fiscal year 2016 and beyond for this bridging work?

Answer: A draft memorandum of agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation and Federal Highways Administration was submitted to NPS on April 1 for review. The current schedule is for the project to be advertised in late May 2015, awarded in March 2016, with ground breaking in April 2016.

The NPS is committed to funding half, or \$72 million, based on the current estimate of the project costs. The remaining Federal share, in FY 2016 and outyears, is \$42 million. In the Administration’s transportation reauthorization proposal, the “GROW AMERICA Act”, the Administration is proposing a Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program, which will provide needed construction or reconstruction of large, nationally significant transportation infrastructure within or accessing federal or tribal lands. The Tamiami Trail project is an excellent candidate for this proposed program. If the transportation reauthorization is not accomplished by FY 2016 and current MAP-21 authority is extended, the NPS plans to defer other high priority projects in the Southeast Region to fund its remaining commitment out of its FLTP allocation over a period of several years, including an estimated \$8.0 million in FY 2016.

Questions from Mr. Cole

Chisholm and Great Western National Historic Trail Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment
 Director Jarvis, a number of my constituents have raised concern and objection to how to National Park Service went about its designation of the Chisholm and Great Western as National Historic Trails.

The Plan states, "Interested members of the public, government agencies, and American Indian tribes were all notified of the study and were invited to participate in the planning process by providing any input, information and/or comments that they had about the feasibility study"; however, none of the Farm Bureau organizations from any of the affected states were listed as organizations or associations receiving notification of the Plan.

In addition to the lack of notification, my constituents are also concerned about the costs they will be forced to bear for this trail. According to the Plan itself, the "inventory of the routes could cost upwards of \$4,000,000. The cost of these inventories are likely to be borne by the landowner/manager."

Finally, many of my constituents question the need for this trail designation in the first place. There are already hundreds of markers, and many interpretive exhibits, marking the route or the vicinity of both the Chisholm and Western Trails.

Cole Q1: Can you explain why the Farm Bureau, which represents more ranchers than any other agricultural organization in Oklahoma, was not included in your notifications about the plan?

Answer: The National Park Service's Chisholm and Great Western National Historic Trails feasibility study team developed a standard approach for reaching out to the public and others during the public scoping period and public comment period on the draft document and the associated environmental assessment. Based on the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act when conducting an environmental assessment, as well as requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Park Service contacted agencies, tribal governments, and other entities that are typically consulted during scoping of an environmental assessment for a proposed National Historic Trail. When scoping for the study was initiated, and based on prior experience with study efforts of this type, the National Park Service also reached out to as many news outlets (newspapers, radio, and television) as it was able to identify. Local and state governments, historical societies, chambers of commerce, and other non-governmental entities were contacted to announce the beginning of the study. Public meetings were held in communities spread out along the two study routes. Meetings were well publicized and well attended. The study team also contacted organizations that had known associations with the study routes such as the International Chisholm Trail Association and the Great Western Trail Association. Members of these and other organizations include ranchers, business people, individual landowners, and other trail advocates.

The Farm Bureau provided comments during the public outreach process regarding the draft study. The National Park Service will evaluate and include these comments, and others regarding the national significance and eligibility of the trails for possible designation, in the final report to Congress.

Cole Q2: Given that the vast majority of land is owned by private individuals in Oklahoma, do you plan to work with these private landowners to ensure their costs are minimized?

Answer: If Congress decided to designate the trails as National Historic Trails (NHTs), private landowners are under no obligation to survey their land or identify trail resources. Survey costs reported in the study are

approximate and cumulative and based on similar trail survey processes. Based on landowner interest, surveys of comprehensive resource values could potentially take decades to complete.

Private landowners who do not wish to participate in the protection and development of the proposed NHTs are under no obligation to do so, and will incur no costs. Landowners who do wish to participate can do so at their own level of comfort and their costs are generally minimal and are usually met in some cost share fashion with the federal, state, and/or local government.

Cole Q3: Can you explain your rationale and need for this designation given that individuals and communities are already promoting these trails?

Answer: The National Park Service was tasked by Congress to study the Chisholm and Western Trails in the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009. The 1968 National Trails Study Act defines the criteria for which a trail qualifies to be designated as a National Historic Trail. The study found that the Chisholm and Western Trails qualify for this designation. Without National Historic Trail designation, there would not be a single, overarching federal agency directed to help coordinate, interpret and protect resources and segments of the trail. National recognition of the events associated with these cattle trails would continue to occur in a piecemeal fashion.

Designation would authorize the NPS to work with interested landowners, managers, communities, and organizations to provide continuity and consistency of recognition and promotion across the four states where trail resources occur. Many communities have identified the value of designation in potentially attracting heritage tourism dollars to their area and see economic value in designation. If the routes are designated, public land managers and interested private landowners along the routes would also be able to compete for federal funding and technical assistance to accomplish preservation, recreation, and interpretation projects along the route. The NPS would work with those interested landowners to mark the route so visitors could easily find the sites and follow the segments that are of historic interest and have the highest potential for public appreciation and recreation.

Chickasaw National Recreation Area

The Chickasaw Nation and the National Park Service have been working for a number of years to develop a good working relationship on project development and management at the Chickasaw National Recreation Area. I would be grateful for an update on:

Cole Q4: I would be grateful for an update on a proposal by the Chickasaw Nation to fully fund the construction of a pedestrian bridge from their Cultural Center to the park.

Answer: The park is currently involved in a final review for the construction of the Tribally-funded bridge to connect the Chickasaw Cultural Center to adjoining park property. The Tribe is also in the process of completing their 100% design for the bridge. Ground-breaking is tentatively planned for May 2015.

Cole Q5: I would be grateful for an update on an offer by the tribe to house the NPS staff at a brand new visitor center at a savings over current lease arrangements in town.

Answer: The park is waiting for the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Tribe to finalize the lease agreement for occupancy of NPS space in the Chickasaw Visitor Center. The park has already begun preparations for the move.

Cole Q6: I would be grateful for an update on a desire by the tribe to assist NPS in taking some of the management burden of a financially strapped local office—an example might include managing campgrounds.

Answer: In December 2014, the NPS Intermountain Regional Director and the Tribal Governor signed an agreement to formalize the working relationship between the park and the Tribe. The park is actively pursuing a partnership with the Tribe to provide for shared interpretive operations in the new visitor center. The Tribe also is going to assist the NPS by providing staff for the park nature center.

Cole Q7: What obstacles are standing in the way of getting some of these things done? We've been trying to move forward for over five years in some cases.

Answer: A number of things have taken time to resolve, such as getting the lease agreement in place for the visitor center and working through the construction approval process for the Tribally-funded bridge. The park has worked diligently with the Tribe to work through these issues and we are pleased that construction on the Tribally-funded bridge will begin in the coming months and look forward to having the final lease agreement in place for the visitor center.

Questions from Mr. Stewart**Glen Canyon National Recreation Area**

In a recent meeting one of my staff attended a meeting in Southern Utah regarding off highway vehicle (OHV) management for Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. It was brought to my attention that a vast majority of vehicles deemed 'legal' are very impractical. Large trucks, mini-vans, and other vehicles are acceptable while smaller OHVs are illegal. I understand that there is a concern for OHV to go off the road but there are rules for that inside the NRA that Park Service Rangers are there to patrol and enforce. The county sheriffs have also offered to patrol and enforce these rules and it is the counties not the Park Service that maintain the roads in the NRA except where the road accesses their developed facilities.

Stewart Q1: Isn't it true that without the roads that are identified the Off Road Vehicle plan there would be no access to lands adjacent to Lake Powell and administration of the recreation area would have a significant adverse effect?

Answer: No park roads that were identified in the 1979 Glen Canyon General Management Plan would be closed or altered as part of the planning process that is underway at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GCNRA), so access to areas within Glen Canyon is not affected. The planning process will produce an *Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (plan/EIS) to manage off-road use by any vehicle and on-road use by off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and street-legal all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). The preferred alternative identified by the NPS would expand recreational opportunities on lands adjacent to Lake Powell because of the additional vehicle use that would be allowed within GCNRA.

In Garfield County, conventional motor vehicle use would continue to be allowed on all fifteen park roads or road segments within the county, and street-legal ATV use would continue on ten of these roads. OHV use would be permitted on seven of these roads. One new ORV route and three ORV areas would be established. A notable revision to the preferred alternative, which was suggested by cooperating agencies and other stakeholders, would be to allow all three classes of vehicles on seven miles of park roads in the Orange Cliffs unit of GCNRA in order to complete the North Hatch Canyon/Poison Spring Loop that continues outside of the park. This road segment is currently only open to conventional motor vehicles. Similar expanded recreational opportunities would be provided in adjacent counties.

Stewart Q2: Many of the roads in the NRA predate the enabling legislation and inasmuch as those roads have continued to be used by the public and are identified as open public roads in the General Management Plan, do you know of any situations where roads in Garfield County Utah have had a significant adverse effect on the administration of the Recreation Area?

Answer: The park road network identified in the 1979 General Management Plan would not be altered as a result of this current planning process. The park roads that were designated in Garfield County would continue to provide access to GCNRA for public recreation and park administration.

Stewart Q3: It is one of my highest priorities to protect the natural beauty in the State of Utah but considering that this and other NRA's are established for the enjoyment of the public can we work together to come up with a reasonable set of rules that will accomplish that objective?

Note: The Counties maintain all of the roads in the NRA, National Park Service does not maintain any except in their developed facilities.

Answer: As described in the plan/EIS, the plan's purpose is to "develop management actions that preserve Glen Canyon's scientific, scenic, and historic features; provide for the recreational use and enjoyment of the area; and promote the resources and values for which the area was established as a unit of the national park system." With respect to vehicle use on park roads, the preferred alternative would expand the recreational opportunities on park roads without creating an unacceptable impact on park resources and values, which is consistent with your desire to balance resource protection with access for public recreation.

We have consulted extensively with the county cooperating agencies throughout the planning process. Based on consultation following publication of the draft plan/EIS, we revised the NPS preferred alternative to authorize the use of OHVs and street-legal ATVs on the park roads in the Orange Cliffs Unit that form part of the Poison Spring Loop.

We learned from the public involvement process that visitors are seeking a wide range of recreational experiences in GCNRA. Many public comments requested that OHVs not be allowed in Glen Canyon at all while others requested greater access. The NPS preferred alternative seeks to provide opportunities that reflect the range of recreation preferences expressed by visitors to GCNRA.

Mandated Minimum Wage

Beginning January 1, 2015, the National Park Service is requiring new permits and use authorizations for outfitters and guides to include increased minimum wage provisions pursuant to Executive Order 13658. These outfitters are generally not government contractors, but are rather small businesses that employ high school and college aged employees who enjoy the seasonal employment. This will have a devastating effect on these small businesses and many may not be able to stay in business.

Stewart Q4: When NPS decided to include these provisions in new permits did you give any consideration to the profoundly negative impact this would have on your permittees?

Answer: The Executive Order will benefit hundreds of thousands of people working under contracts and contract-like instruments with the Federal government who are making less than \$10.10 an hour. It will also improve the value that taxpayers are getting from the federal government's investment.

The NPS understands that the EO impacts our commercial services contracts and agreements. The Department of Labor, which was required to issue regulations to implement the EO, determined that it does apply to Commercial Use Authorizations as well as leases and concession contracts, and NPS and its contract holders must comply with this requirement.

Stewart Q5: Would NPS be supportive of relief for these small family, rural businesses?

Answer: The NPS strongly supports this Executive Order and believes that workers on Federal contracts deserve a fair wage. NPS will continue to evaluate the impact that it has on contracts and agreements with other organizations.

Questions from Mr. Amodei**Concessions – Water Bottles**

In December 2011, the National Park Service (NPS) Director Jonathan Jarvis issued Policy Memorandum 11-03, which authorizes park superintendents to ban bottled water sales on a park-by-park basis, with approval from their regional director. The Memorandum requires that proposals for bans be based upon a “rigorous” written impact analysis, considering certain specified factors relating to health and safety, waste reduction, cost, and impacts on concessioners. Under the Memorandum, parks that ban bottled water must prepare an annual evaluation, “including public response, visitor satisfaction, buying behavior, public safety, and plastic collection rates.” The Memorandum further commits that the policy will be monitored, and revisited periodically to determine whether a change in the policy is desirable or necessary.

Very little public information exists as to the monitoring of the bans and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives set out in the Memorandum. More than three years after it was put in place, Congressional oversight is needed to review and ensure the efficacy of the policy and look at its impacts on health, safety, and the environment.

Amodei Q1: Is the National Park Service adhering to Policy Memorandum 11-03?

I understand there is a Freedom of Information Act appeal involving a request for documents relating to this issue that has been pending at the Department of the Interior for over a year, but that the Department and the National Park Service have yet to provide any substantive response to this appeal.

Answer: NPS Policy Memorandum 11-03 regarding Disposable Plastic Water Bottle Recycling and Reduction was published in December of 2011. The policy encourages recycling, reduction, and education regarding disposable waste bottles.

The elimination of plastic water bottles is not mandatory. Individual parks may request approval to discontinue the sale of disposable water bottles at in-park venues. Currently, 19 parks have elected to eliminate plastic bottle sales. Visitors to the parks continue to be free to purchase and bring with them any legal beverages in the packaging material of their choice. Initial feedback from parks suggests that this policy has resulted in less plastic and aluminum garbage and decreased litter in the parks.

Among the 19 parks that have eliminated disposable water bottles, many do not have a concessioner operation at the park. Of those that do, the NPS review of the data leads the NPS to conclude that the concessioners have not suffered a substantial loss in gross sales revenue.

Parks Participating in the Elimination Component of Policy Memorandum 11-03:

Arches National Park
 Biscayne National Park
 Bryce Canyon National Park
 Canyonlands National Park
 Cape Hatteras National Seashore
 Colorado National Monument
 Fort Raleigh National Historic Site
 Grand Canyon National Park
 Lake Mead National Recreation Area
 Mount Rushmore National Monument

Pecos National Historical Park
 Petrified Forest National Park
 Saguaro National Park
 Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument
 San Antonio Missions National Historical Park
 Timpanogos Cave National Monument
 Wind Cave National Park
 Wright Brothers National Memorial
 Zion National Park

Amodei Q2: What are the reasons for this delay and why are these documents not publicly available?

Answer: In November 2013, the National Park Service responded to a FOIA request for records related to implementing a ban or limitations on plastic water bottles. These documents were made publicly available on the NPS FOIA Reading Room Website. On December 12, 2013, an appeal was filed requesting more information regarding post-ban analyses and on March 16, 2015 the Department of the Interior's Solicitor's Office granted the appeal. The Solicitor's office remanded the search back to the National Park Service's FOIA officer.

Previously, a similar search conducted for Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) found that parks do not separately report their solid waste based on type (plastic, bottles, paper, etc.) and as such do not have data available to conduct a post-ban analysis. The previous search found that no parks have completed a post-ban analysis. The new search, currently underway, is not generating additional information.

Amodei Q3: Are there any additional proposals pending within the Department to ban bottled water sales in the national park system?

Answer: There are not additional proposals pending with the Department. The National Park Service's Disposable Plastic Water Bottle Recycling and Reduction Initiative is designed to reduce the environmental impacts of plastic bottle use in our parks; the initiative does not ban bottled water in national parks but rather allows some parks the option to eliminate the sale of disposable plastic water bottles in their retail facilities on a park-by-park basis. Parks wishing to participate in the program must receive approval from their regional director in writing after analyzing and addressing a number of factors including, but not limited to, installing adequate water filling stations, providing or selling reusable water bottles, consulting with the Public Health Office and other requirements as applicable.

Questions from Mr. Kilmer**Lower Elwha Dam Removal**

Thank you for your work in regards to addressing some issues associated with Lower Elwha Dam removal. I understand that the Lower Elwha Tribe has an interest in working with the Park Service to remove some rocky debris below the Elwha Dam site and potential removal of boulders at the Glines Dam site.

Kilmer Q1: How is the Park Service responding to this request?

Answer: The National Park Service is currently developing options and possible costs for remediation of the potential rock blockages to salmon migration at both the Elwha Dam and the Glines Dam sites. Park staff are coordinating with tribal staff on this issue and have completed site visits. Independent government cost estimates for possible options are expected to be available by mid-April 2015; next steps can be determined at that time. Any substantial work would likely need to wait until the summer low flow season of 2016, dependent upon the availability of project funds. In the meantime, park staff will continue to monitor fish passage at both sites to document the extent of the problem. Some salmon have been observed to pass the sites, and park staff are radio-tagging fish to track movements upstream.

Tribal Historic Preservation Offices

In recent years, the number of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices has grown from 100 to 151, while the average grant has dropped to \$60,000. The President's Budget proposes a \$1 million increase in funding for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices. Given the great risk of vanishing tribal cultural resources and heritage, I am concerned that this funding increase is not sufficient to keep up with the need to survey historic properties, complete oral history projects, or provide assistance to tribal governments looking to carry out historic preservation responsibilities.

Kilmer Q2: As funding levels have failed to keep track with the increased number of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, how has the capacity of individual tribal offices to meet preservation needs been affected?

Answer: As the number of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) has grown, the average grant award per THPO has fallen. THPOs now use the majority of their funding to administer their offices and pay the salaries of staff conducting review and compliance activities, with little left to implement any broad tribal preservation initiatives, initiate tribal-funded surveys of historic properties, produce nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, or undertake cultural preservation projects. Additionally, the lack of funding impacts the ability of individual tribes to provide comprehensive consultative services to Federal agencies; in 2013, less than 1/3 of all THPOs were able to conduct surveys and add properties to Tribal Historic Property Inventories.

On average, 10-17 new THPOs come into existence each year. The FY 2016 President's Budget Request includes an increase of \$1.0 million for THPO grants to ensure that as these new THPOs are included, the average grant award does not fall below \$50,000 by FY 2016. This request would provide support to tribes in the preservation of vanishing tribal cultural resources and heritage and allow tribes to participate in national preservation programs, develop capacity to conduct sustainable preservation programs, and engage tribal youth.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2015.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

WITNESS

NEIL G. KORNZE, DIRECTOR

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN CALVERT

Mr. CALVERT. The subcommittee will come to order.

Good morning. Today we have our hearing on the President's budget request for fiscal year 2016 for the Bureau of Land Management.

I would like to welcome Neil Kornze, Director of the Bureau of Land Management, to the subcommittee.

Thank you for being here.

The budget request proposes \$1.2 billion for the BLM for fiscal year 2016. That is an increase of \$107 million above the 2015 enacted level. Unfortunately, there are many, many increases in this budget request. It also includes some very questionable decreases.

Director, your colleagues at the Department of Interior and mine on this subcommittee have heard me say numerous times that we are operating in a very constrained funding environment. As you know, the President and Congress agreed upon statutory spending caps in 2011, and we are bound by that law. The many increases proposed for BLM ignore the reality of that agreement and our present fiscal situation.

Of course, we are going to do our best to address the highest priorities and needs for the subcommittee's jurisdiction. But please be aware, any increases most likely will have to be offset by decreases in other accounts and programs.

Let me first mention the largest increase in the budget request, which is a \$45 million increase for sage-grouse. As you mentioned in your testimony, Congress has provided \$15 million in each of the previous 3 fiscal years for BLM to work with other Federal agencies, States, private groups to develop and begin to implement plans to conserve the sage-grouse and many other plant and animal species that reside in the sagebrush ecosystem.

Generally, the \$45 million increase is intended to put the conservation practice identified in the plans on the ground, so to speak, and then assess and monitor the effectiveness. At last year's hearing, I asked whether the \$15 million requested was enough. I also said we didn't want to find out after the sage-grouse has been listed there was more that BLM could have done. Now I guess we have the answer.

I don't know if an additional \$45 million is the right amount to ensure that result, but it certainly does demonstrate BLM's commitment to conserving the species and the ecosystem. However, we need much more information about the request before we can make

our final funding recommendations for next year. I am sure we will be talking about it today and in the future.

Another large increase is an additional \$11 million, as well as to transfer another \$5 million from various other accounts, for National Conservation Lands. As you know, there is some debate about the structure of this program in Congress.

There is an \$8 million increase for Enterprise Geographic Information System, a \$6 million increase to finalize master leasing plans, \$5 million for youth programs, and nearly \$3 million for the Wild Horse and Burro Program, one of Mr. Stewart's favorite subjects. We need to hear from you on which of these is your top priority. Not everything can be funded as one may want or wish it to be.

The budget request also includes proposals to raise and impose new fees. This is frustrating, as Congress has rejected these proposals in the past. I expect we will do that again. And I know the fee would generate \$48 million but impose additional costs, also, on the oil and gas industry. I believe Congress has responded to the need for more inspections by providing additional appropriations, which came from offsetting cuts elsewhere in the budget.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the proposal to raise \$16.5 million by increasing the fee for grazing livestock on the BLM land.

That is just when Mr. Simpson walks in. I am sure that is a very—

Mr. SIMPSON. That was the issue that brought me.

Mr. CALVERT. Congress just has not supported this proposal as part of the appropriations process in the past. The subcommittee continues to believe this issue should be addressed by the authorizing committees.

Earlier this week, at our hearing on Fish and Wildlife Service's budget request, I talked about the need to address the backlogs that we have in the endangered and threatened species program. However, the issue of backlogs isn't confined to only endangered species. It is a reality for many programs across the Federal Government, including the Wild Horse and Burro Program.

We know the program is unsustainable in its current form and that we cannot afford to perpetuate the situation much longer, especially since \$54 million, 67 percent of that program, is used to care for horses and burros in holding facilities. The subcommittee is well aware that we need a bipartisan, long-term strategy of sustainable, nonlethal population management as well as a short-term solution to the overabundance of horses and burros on the range.

In a time of lean budgets and growing needs, particularly in our defense and security programs, which we are reading about today, perhaps we should have a serious discussion about getting back to basics. We need to find solutions to these long-simmering issues.

Now let me yield to our distinguished ranking member, Ms. McCollum, for any opening remarks she may have.

OPENING REMARKS OF RANKING MEMBER MCCOLLUM

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning. I would like to welcome you, Director Kornze, to the subcommittee, and I would like to thank you for being here.

A few weeks ago, I was able to visit with you at the BLM offices, and we had a very productive meeting. I want to thank you and all your staff for all the questions that they fielded and information that they provided. It was very informative.

The BLM is the caretaker for our Nation's public lands, protecting one-eighth of this country. BLM ensures that our lands are responsibly managed and that its precious resources are available for both current and future generations. This is a big task, so I am pleased to see that the President's budget request moves in the direction of providing more funding for the agency.

The President has brought forward a way in which we, as Congress, could choose to remove the threat of sequestration and move away from the Budget Control Act and do our daily responsibility to the taxpayers. We might not all agree with the President's off-sets, but he does have a budget, it does move forward, and it is paid for.

The BLM is requesting an increase of \$94 million above the fiscal year 2015 level. It is a total of \$1.2 billion.

While this budget request is larger than last year, I want to stress it is a very conservative budget. If we look back a decade ago, BLM was funded at \$1.8 billion, so this budget request is a half a billion dollars less than a decade ago, and if adjusted for inflation, the gap grows to \$900 million.

Over the last decade, as funding has decreased, the demands for BLM have increased. There are more gas and oil leases to manage. The issues surrounding wild horses, as the chairman pointed out, persist. And there are challenges associated with mitigating the effects of climate change. All this is complex.

All of these issues are interconnected, and they must be addressed in tandem. For example, the conservation of the sagebrush ecosystem is absolutely essential in protecting the more than 350 species that depend upon it. However, the wild horse management issue must also be dealt with because the herds are negatively impacting the sagebrush steppe landscape.

The BLM has offered a restrained budget that strategically directs funding to the highest priorities. BLM has also offered two legislative proposals that will allow the Bureau to increase capacity without increasing appropriated levels.

The first proposal would be to provide BLM with the authority to collect onshore and offshore gas inspection fees—user fees. If you use it, you pay for it. This revenue would cover most of the costs of BLM inspection activities but allow BLM to ensure accountability across the board with the 23,500 producing leases. The authority would also create parity between how the Federal Government treats offshore and onshore gas and oil inspections. If we expect BLM to safeguard that energy that is being developed in a safe and responsible manner, it is essential that BLM has the adequate inspection resources to do so.

The second proposal, which I mentioned a little bit to the committee yesterday, is a proposal that establishes a congressional-chartered nonprofit foundation for BLM. The foundation would be similar to those that already exist for the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife, and the Forest Service. It would allow BLM to form public-private partnerships that would leverage resources to

support the BLM's mission. This foundation could foster engagement between the public and their lands. Moreover, it could allow for a creative solution to some of the Bureau's most pressing challenges.

I fully support these two proposals, and I will work with my colleagues to include them in this year's appropriations bill.

Although, Mr. Chair, one sounds like it might be a little tougher to get you to work with me on.

Director Kornze, I appreciate the work that you do and the employees of the Bureau of Land Management, and I look forward to your testimony.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Director, you are now recognized to present your BLM budget request for fiscal year 2016.

OPENING REMARKS OF DIRECTOR KORNZE

Mr. KORNZE. Excellent.

Chairman, Ranking Member, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be with you today.

The BLM manages nearly 250 million acres of land in terms of surface and 700 million acres of subsurface estate in the Nation. That means 10 percent of the Nation's surface or more, and nearly a third of its minerals and soils. We manage these under the dual framework of multiple use and sustained yield.

The Bureau's work is more complex than ever, which has been nicely highlighted, and I do appreciate that. The professionals at the BLM have to make hard choices every day. We balance significant conflicts in nearly every State in the Nation, and we make sure that the public has a strong voice in the work that we do.

We also play a major role in the economies of many States through the role that we have in supporting oil and gas development, all kinds of recreation, hunting and fishing, helium production, timber, coal production, ranching, wildland firefighting, and even beekeeping. More than 450,000 jobs were supported by the agency on the lands that we manage last year. And we are one of only a handful of agencies that returns more revenue to the government than we receive in appropriations. In fact, for every dollar that you appropriate, we return \$5.

Now let me highlight four priority areas from our budget for 2016.

The first is sage-grouse. The BLM is leading a West-wide effort with Western Governors from 11 States to strengthen management of sage-grouse habitat. This includes extensive collaboration with State agencies, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, counties, and other partners. The President's budget requests a total of \$60 million to support this work and to implement the sage-grouse plans that we will complete later this year.

Through our combined efforts, we hope the Nation will be able to avoid a listing of the sage-grouse. And with the funds that we have requested, we will engage our partners and effect projects that will reduce the threat of wildfire, slow and reverse the spread of invasive species, improve riparian areas, and remove hundreds of thousands of pinyon and juniper trees.

The second priority I want to discuss is national Conservation Lands. The President requests an important increase in this program. And these lands make up roughly 10 percent of the lands that the BLM manages, yet we receive 25 percent or more of our visitors to these places.

And these places include areas like the Carrizo Plain, near the chairman's district; the San Juan Islands of Washington State; Craters of the Moon National Monument; and Red Rock Canyon in southern Nevada; and many other areas across the country. In fact, we manage about 21 national conservation areas, 21 monuments, and nearly 700 wilderness areas and wilderness study areas.

The support that we are seeking for these congressionally and presidentially protected areas will allow us to provide basic levels of service for our many visitors and will help us boost the economies of local communities that depend on these areas and visitation to them.

The third program is the BLM Foundation. In connection with this budget, the President has sent forward a legislative proposal that would establish a congressionally chartered foundation to support the work of the Bureau. A foundation would strengthen the BLM's efforts to link Americans to their public lands through an organization that would help leverage private funds and private support for public work.

The foundation would operate in a manner very similar to the National Park Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the National Forest Foundation. And I would submit to you that the Bureau of Land Management has the most complicated mission of any of those agencies, and we could greatly use the support and the outside facilitation.

And, finally, the fourth program I want to discuss is the oil and gas fee proposal.

What we are seeking is the ability to support oil and gas development while also ensuring that these activities are done safely and responsibly. We are asking for the approval of a minor fee that would allow the agency to be more responsive to the ups and downs of oil and gas development in the country.

In the last 10 years, the BLM has authorized more than 50,000 wells, and, with that, today we have more than 100,000 wells across the country that we have oversight responsibility for. Now, it takes roughly 220 inspectors to cover that terrain. Today, we have 159. We need your help.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, this is a very important and critical time for the American West, for the country, for this agency. We appreciate the partnership we have had with you in the past, and we look forward to working with you on our 2016 budget.

Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

[The information follows:]

**Statement of Neil G. Kornze, Director
Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
FY 2016 Budget Request for the Bureau of Land Management**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to join you today to discuss the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 budget request for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM manages nearly 250 million acres of land and 700 million acres of subsurface estate. That's more than 10 percent of the Nation's surface and nearly a third of its minerals. The BLM manages this vast portfolio on behalf of the American people under the dual framework of multiple use and sustained yield. This means the BLM manages public lands for a broad range of uses including renewable and conventional energy development, livestock grazing, timber production, hunting, fishing, recreation, and conservation. We manage lands with some of the most advanced energy development in the world and some of North America's most wild and sacred landscapes.

With such a large footprint and a complex mission, the land management professionals of the BLM make hard choices every day to manage the public lands on behalf of the American people. Whereas other Federal agencies may be directed to primarily support development or conservation, at the BLM we do it all. This unique role often puts the BLM in the middle of some of the most challenging natural resource issues facing our country, from species conservation to advancements in energy extraction. Across the country, we do this work proudly and with a special emphasis on transparency and public processes to incorporate the input and needs of the American people and of the communities in which we live and work.

As an agency, we are relatively small in number – just 10,000 employees – but the impact of the BLM and BLM-managed resources is tremendous. Recent Interior studies indicate BLM's management of the public lands provides an outstanding economic return to the American public. In 2013, activities on lands under the BLM's management were estimated to contribute over \$107 billion to the Nation's economic output and support more than 440,000 jobs across a broad range of industries. While the BLM receives just over a billion dollars in annual appropriations to support our programs nationwide, our programs support the collection and distribution of more than five billion dollars to the U.S. Treasury and to State governments each year.

Our FY 2016 budget continues our tradition of serving the American public by supporting economic development and jobs in traditional and emerging industries, conserving our natural resources, reducing our dependence on foreign energy, protecting our Nation's cultural heritage, and preserving some of our Nation's most cherished places.

BLM Budget Request

The FY 2016 BLM budget request is \$1.2 billion, an increase of \$107.6 million from the 2015 enacted level. The budget proposes \$1.1 billion for the Management of Lands and Resources

appropriation and \$107.7 million for the Oregon and California Grant Lands appropriation, the BLM's two operating accounts. The budget also proposes \$38.0 million in discretionary funding for Land Acquisition, to complement \$55.4 million proposed in mandatory Land Acquisition funding. These investments fall under the following program areas.

Supporting and Modernizing Management of Increased Energy Production – In the past six years, the BLM has worked to facilitate a clean energy revolution on public lands, approving scores of utility-scale renewable energy generation and transmission projects. The agency has also overseen continued natural gas production and a significant increase in oil production from public lands in recent years. Federal onshore oil production in 2013 rose seven percent from the previous year and was up almost 30 percent since 2008. The BLM works closely with partners across the country to ensure development of renewable and conventional energy occurs in the right places and projects are managed safely and responsibly. The President's budget proposes significant investments for improving how the BLM leases, permits, and inspects oil and gas wells, including updating regulations to reflect current industry practices and putting needed technology in the hands of BLM employees.

The 2016 budget for oil and gas management activities from all sources represents an increase of \$29.1 million over the 2015 enacted level, a roughly 20 percent increase. The additional funding will help make the BLM faster and smarter in responding to management issues, public concerns, and the needs of industry. The President's budget reflects a new approach to providing resources to the field with a proposal to strengthen BLM's inspection program by charging a fee comparable to that charged for offshore development. The new fee schedule is estimated to generate \$48 million in 2016, which will provide a program increase of \$6.9 million for these activities, while reducing the need for direct discretionary appropriations. The increased funding will allow the BLM to hire additional inspectors who are needed to fulfill the agency's high priority inspection workload. This increase is critical for the BLM to be more responsive to industry demand and a constantly changing inspections workload. Significantly, it will also support BLM efforts to address ongoing program management concerns that have placed the program on GAO's High Risk list.

Coal produced from Federal lands is the source of over 20 percent of all U.S. electricity. An increase of \$1.1 million in Coal Management will support the automation and tracking of licenses, leases and permitting as well as inspection activities, including production verification associated with coal. A \$1.1 million increase is also requested for a similar automated tracking system in the Other Mineral Resources Management program. The BLM also supports the modernization of energy transmission infrastructure. To support necessary upgrades for reliability and increased capacity, the budget includes a \$5.0 million increase to identify and designate energy corridors in low conflict areas and to site high-voltage electrical transmission lines, substations, and related infrastructure in an environmentally sensitive manner.

Restoring Sage Grouse Habitat through Partnerships and Collaboration – To ensure the long-term viability of sage grouse and the continued vitality of western economies, the BLM is leading an unprecedented, collaborative west-wide effort to update and strengthen management of sage grouse habitat. Key collaborators include western Governors, State wildlife agencies, counties, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the U.S. Forest

Service. The 2016 BLM budget request includes a total of \$60 million – a \$45.0 million increase over the 2015 enacted level – for implementing the Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy to enhance sage steppe conservation and restoration across the landscape, which supports significant economic activity as well as more than 350 species. These funds will allow the agency and its many partners to take meaningful steps forward on restoring rangelands, minimizing the threat of wildfire, controlling invasive plants, and improving riparian areas.

Since 2013, the BLM has targeted \$15.0 million per year toward implementation of broad-scale sage grouse planning and conservation activities. These efforts involve extraordinary collaboration between the BLM, western Governors, and non-governmental partners to conserve the sage steppe ecosystem.

Supporting the BLM National Conservation Lands, America’s Newest Conservation System – The President’s budget includes an \$11.2 million program increase for the BLM National Conservation Lands, which celebrate their 15th anniversary in 2016. This investment will address high-priority needs in conservation areas, including providing basic support for recreation and visitor services. While National Conservation Lands represent only a small portion of the lands managed by BLM, one-quarter of all visitors to BLM lands visit these special areas. This investment will help to ensure these untamed places remain a legacy for all future generations.

Though visitation to BLM lands has grown, financial investment in the Recreation and Visitor Services program has not kept pace with this growth. This request proposes an additional \$6.6 million to implement a National Recreation Strategy that aligns BLM Recreation & Visitor Services Program resources with the desired benefits sought by local communities. A strong commitment to conservation also means proactive management of cultural and paleontological resources. Through a modest \$2.0 million increase, we will bolster the BLM’s capacity to preserve and protect these vast heritage resources.

The 2016 budget also includes increases for programs funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a vital component of the America’s Great Outdoors initiative. The 2016 budget proposal includes a total of \$93.4 million for conservation land acquisition from willing sellers, including \$38.0 million in requested discretionary appropriations and \$55.4 million in mandatory funding.

Other Priority Initiatives – The 2016 BLM budget request includes an increase of \$5.0 million for the BLM’s youth programs and partnerships to accomplish high-priority projects and promote quality participant experiences and pathways to careers. The budget includes a \$5.0 million program increase to expand BLM’s Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) strategy that will support increased data collection and monitoring needs central to the success of high priority landscape management efforts, such as the Western Solar Energy Plan, and the implementation of the plan for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, the Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy, and the Secretary’s broader landscape mitigation strategy. The request also includes a \$7.8 million increase to support implementation of the BLM’s geospatial (GIS) strategy.

Understanding and responding to the impacts of a changing climate is an Administration priority, and a \$10.0 million increase for the Challenge Cost Share program will expand the BLM's work with non-Federal partners on projects that improve the resilience of landscapes. A \$2.9 million increase in the Wild Horse and Burro program will allow the BLM to aggressively implement research and development recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences and continue efforts to find innovative solutions through implementation of a Prize Challenge. The budget also proposes a grazing administration fee of \$2.50 per animal unit month to generate \$16.5 million in 2016, enhancing the BLM's capacity for processing grazing permits and providing timely service to the ranchers who depend on public lands.

Legislative Proposals

Establishing a BLM Foundation – In connection with the budget request, the Administration sent to Congress a legislative proposal for a congressionally chartered non-profit foundation for the BLM. A foundation would strengthen the BLM's efforts to link Americans to their public lands through an organization that would raise and spend private funds and foster constructive partnerships in support of the BLM's mission. The foundation would operate in a manner similar to the National Park Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the National Forest Foundation, all of which were approved by Congress.

Oil and Gas Management Reforms – The Administration proposes a package of legislative reforms to bolster and backstop administrative actions being taken to reform the management of Interior's onshore and offshore oil and gas programs, with a key focus on improving the return to taxpayers from the sale of these Federal resources and on improving transparency and oversight. Proposed statutory and administrative changes fall into three general categories: advancing royalty reforms, encouraging diligent development of oil and gas leases, and improving revenue collection processes.

Royalty reforms include evaluating minimum royalty rates for oil, gas, and similar products; adjusting onshore royalty rates; analyzing a price-based tiered royalty rate; and repealing legislatively mandated royalty relief. Diligent development requirements include shorter primary lease terms, stricter enforcement of lease terms, and monetary incentives to get leases into production, for example, through a new per-acre fee on nonproducing leases. Revenue collection improvements include simplification of the royalty valuation process, elimination of interest accruals on company overpayments of royalties, and permanent repeal of Interior's authority to accept in-kind royalty payments. Collectively, these reforms will generate roughly \$2.5 billion in revenue to the Treasury over ten years, of which an estimated \$1.7 billion will result from statutory changes.

Hardrock Mining Reform – The 2016 budget includes two legislative proposals to reform hardrock mining on public and private lands by addressing abandoned mine land hazards and providing a better return to the taxpayer from hardrock mineral production on public lands. The first component of this reform addresses abandoned hardrock mines across the country through a new Abandoned Mine Lands fee on hardrock mineral production. The second legislative proposal institutes a leasing process under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 for certain minerals – gold, silver, lead, zinc, copper, uranium, and molybdenum – currently covered by the General

Mining Law of 1872. Under this proposal, mining for these metals on Federal lands would be governed by the new leasing process and subject to annual rental payments and a royalty of not less than five percent of gross proceeds.

Recreation Fee Program – The budget proposes legislation to permanently authorize the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which will expire on September 30, 2016. The BLM currently collects approximately \$18.0 million in recreation fees annually under this authority and uses them to enhance the visitor experience at recreation facilities. These funds represent a significant portion of all the resources BLM has to devote to supporting recreational activities on public lands.

Reauthorize the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) – The 2016 budget proposes to reauthorize the Act, which expired in July 2011, to allow lands identified as suitable for disposal in recent land use plans to be sold using the FLTFA authority. The sales revenues would continue to be used to fund the acquisition of environmentally-sensitive lands and to cover the administrative costs associated with conducting sales. Utilization of the FLTFA authority would help simplify the land patterns of the American West, promoting both conservation and community development goals.

Conclusion

The President's FY 2016 budget request for the BLM makes important investments at a critical time for our agency and for the lands we manage across the Nation. The BLM has a unique and broad mission to manage public lands for multiple-uses and for sustained-yield. I am incredibly proud of the work done by BLM employees every day to ensure the agency is engaging with and listening to our partners and the communities we serve. I look forward to continuing our close partnership with this subcommittee as we strive to provide BLM's professionals with the tools and resources they need to succeed and to make our public lands an even larger contributor to the success of communities across the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Neil Kornze

Director, Bureau of Land Management

On April 8, 2014, Neil Kornze was confirmed by the U.S. Congress as the Director of the Bureau of Land Management. From March 1, 2013 until his confirmation, Neil Kornze led the BLM as the agency's Principal Deputy Director. Kornze oversees the agency's management of more than 245 million acres of public land nationwide.

Prior to serving in his current role, Kornze was the BLM's Acting Deputy Director for Policy and Programs starting in October 2011. Kornze joined the organization in January 2011 as a Senior Advisor to the Director. In these roles, he worked on a broad range of issues, including renewable and conventional energy development, transmission siting, and conservation policy.

Kornze was a key player in the development of the Western Solar Plan and the agency's successful authorization more than 10,000 megawatts of renewable energy, surpassing a congressionally-established goal three years ahead of schedule. He has also been active in tribal consultation, especially as it relates to oil and gas and renewable energy development.

Before coming to the Bureau of Land Management, Kornze worked as a Senior Advisor to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada. In his work for Senator Reid, which spanned from early 2003 to early 2011, he worked on a variety of public lands issues, including renewable energy development, mining, water, outdoor recreation, rural development, and wildlife. Kornze has also served as an international election observer in Macedonia, the Ukraine, and Georgia and is co-author of an article in *The Oxford Companion to American Law*.

Raised in Elko, NV, Kornze is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate with a degree in Politics from Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA. He earned a master's degree in International Relations at the London School of Economics.

GRAZING PERMIT FEE

Mr. CALVERT. Let's get into a few issues. And I am sure we are going to have a number of our colleagues here join in on this, but grazing, obviously, is a big issue in the West. It is integral to BLM's multiple-use mission. It is good for the land. Of course, grazing must be appropriate to the area and well managed.

At this time, BLM has prioritized its review of most of the environmentally sensitive grazing permits. As you know, Congress has not supported the administration's fee proposal for the grazing management program in the past, and we continue to believe this issue should be addressed by the authorizing committees. In general, proposing new fees or increasing fees is done by the authorizing committees. It is not impossible for us to do that, but it is appropriate for the authorizing committees to be doing that kind of work. But it is proposed, once again, if enacted, it would raise \$16.5 million.

BLM manages about 17,750 grazing permits. What is the current backlog of the permits you are waiting to review?

Mr. KORNZE. Mr. Chairman, we have a backlog of roughly 6,000 permits right now, so about a third of permits in the system.

Mr. CALVERT. How many permits is the agency able to review each year?

Mr. KORNZE. There are about 1,800 if you average out the 18,000 permits we have. They are a 10-year duration, so we have about 1,800, on average, that come up each year. We fall behind about another 400 each year. So 1,400 is roughly the number of permits that we are able to process.

Mr. CALVERT. 1,400. Will a fee really quicken that pace? Will that take care of that problem?

Mr. KORNZE. It will help chip away at it. So the fee we have proposed, in terms of level of funding, we expect we would, instead of losing 400 permits of ground each year, we would gain 200. So we would start to chip away at the problem.

Mr. CALVERT. There are questions whether or not this fee, the \$16.5 million we are talking about—would you hire more staff, or would you be putting that money into more litigation costs?

Mr. KORNZE. My hope would be boots on the ground.

Mr. CALVERT. But you certainly have been spending a significant amount of money for litigation.

Mr. KORNZE. Not by choice.

Mr. CALVERT. Yeah.

Ms. McCollum.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

MINERAL LEASE RENEWAL VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

I would like to make a comment for the record regarding the potential copper-nickel mining in northern Minnesota that poses a direct threat to Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

BLM manages these mineral leases in Superior National Forest. And these leases are more than 40 years old—40 years old. So they do not provide the taxpayers in Minnesota and across the country any of the modern environmental protections for any possible miti-

gation or cleanup should pollution occur. So the American people would be, you know, at risk for 40-year-old permits.

So I believe that there is a legal obligation to review these leases, but it needs to be done in a way that brings together everything that would be potentially devastating for the environmental economy and impact on Voyageurs and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. I would like to see that be a priority in your determination, to make sure that these leases are up to date with the science and what we know now.

So I respect your work that the BLM is doing on this very important issue. And I just wanted you to know, for the record, I think you should bring these leases determinations up to date.

Mr. KORNZE. I appreciate that, Congresswoman. This is an issue that we are paying close attention to. It is Forest Service land on the surface, and Bureau of Land Management manages the minerals. So the two agencies are working close together, and we will find a prudent way to move forward.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Stewart.

GRAZING PERMIT BACKLOG

Mr. STEWART. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, it is good to see you. Thanks for the time we have spent together.

Before I go into my other questions, can I back up for just a second to the chairman's point about some of the BLM and chipping away at that? I want to make sure I understood it.

Right now, we are at a deficit of some 6,000 permits, is that right, applications?

Mr. KORNZE. We are.

So a little bit of background on the grazing program. We have a grazing fee in this country. It has been \$1.35 in recent years; now it is \$1.69. It is set on a number of factors, but essentially it is pegged to a 1960s price index. So it does lag where other lands are, where State lands are.

For instance, in the State of Utah, you have two categories of grazing land. You sort of have low quality and high quality. For the low quality, a person would pay about \$4. For high quality, you would pay about \$8. In the State of Idaho, you would pay about \$7—

Mr. STEWART. And, Director, I am going to interrupt for just a second, if I could, because my question is actually simple and different than that.

Mr. KORNZE. Please.

Mr. STEWART. And that is, if we are behind by 6,000 and we are only going to chip away at these things an additional 200 a year, I mean, it will take 30 years to get caught up. Am I missing something?

Mr. KORNZE. It will take us quite a long time.

And part of the issue—and I apologize for not jumping to this—is that the revenue we get from those grazing fees doesn't come to our program.

Mr. STEWART. Yeah.

Mr. KORNZE. And half of it goes to counties. Half of it goes to range improvements, which are great additions, but we clearly—I think you can see, and we can see, that we need a new way to support a more robust effort for this program.

Mr. STEWART. Yeah, that is just not enough. I mean, if that is our plan—it is hard to go back and tell folks, well, you know, we will fix your problem in 30 years, sometime in the next 30 years. We need to have a more aggressive answer to that. I don't know what it would be and would love to talk to you about that. But I don't think that is a sufficient answer, and I don't think you do either. I don't think you would be satisfied with a 30-year plan to reduce this backlog.

ALTON COAL MINE

Now, if I could get to something that, surprise, surprise, you and I have talked about many times. You know, I had some friends—I did not, but I had some friends who flew in the first night of the Gulf war, and they called this a target-rich environment. And that is the same thing for you and I and others who are interested. And there is so much that we could talk about—I mean, sage-grouse, wild horse and burros. I appreciate that we are talking about energy and grazing. Those are important issues. Monuments, or the potential for monuments—which many of us in my district are fearful that the administration will exert an authority I don't think they have in claiming a monument that would be similar to the Grand Staircase, or Grand Escalante.

Again, I could keep going, Director, with other things, but if I could narrow it down to something, again, that we have talked about and that I am very appreciative of the partnership that we have been able to have on a couple things—the Utah prairie dog, we have made real success on that. And I am proud to tell people that the BLM has been a real partner in working with us on that. And as I have said here in other hearings with the Interior Secretary just a few weeks ago, we have made more progress in the last year than we made in 20 years. And we appreciate that.

But the one issue that we have left unaccounted still is the Alton Coal Mine in the southern part of my district. And I know you know this, but for others who may not, this is an incredibly important economic consideration for my district.

It is in a very rural area. There is a deep heritage of these miners, and it allows them to raise families in an area that is nearly impossible without these types of jobs. And they will lose 350 jobs if we don't get some progress or if we don't make some progress with the issue with the sage-grouse.

And we talked about this yesterday. Can you reiterate for me, so that we can show people who will watch this hearing, that we think we are going to have progress on that in the next 6 weeks or so, as you indicated to me yesterday?

Mr. KORNZE. Yes, we are working hard on this effort. We are collaborating with the State of Utah per our regulations. And we hope to have something moved forward for the public to look at in terms of a draft environmental impact statement here, in the next 6 to 8 weeks.

Mr. STEWART. I understand that right now we are waiting for a piece of information from Utah. We talked with Ms. Clarke about that yesterday, and she assured us that they will be very quick in returning that information to you. And then, hopefully, by the end of April, we think we would have a determination on that. Is that true?

Mr. KORNZE. That is our goal.

Mr. STEWART. Do you know what the outcome of that finding will be? Do you know that yet?

Mr. KORNZE. It is just a draft EIS. So we will put out the alternatives and engage the public, and then it wouldn't be until the final that we would have a decision.

Mr. STEWART. That is right. Okay. All right.

Well, once again, we have been encouraged by working with you on these other issues. We hope that we can continue to be encouraged as we work this—this local issue. I recognize that you come here to talk about the budget, and you want to talk about billions, and, instead, many of us end up talking about things that are so important to our own districts. We appreciate your patience on that. But I think you also understand how important it is that we have this opportunity to discuss those issues with you.

Mr. KORNZE. Absolutely. I am glad to do it.

Mr. STEWART. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Mr. Kilmer.

BLM FOUNDATION

Mr. KILMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just have a brief question. I know that the BLM has asked for the capacity to create a foundation to better connect the public to public lands. I was hoping you could speak a little bit about that: how it supports your mission, how it supports public lands, and how it is different from the authority that you all already have.

Mr. KORNZE. I appreciate the question.

The foundation would be a congressionally chartered nonprofit which would be attached to us but also attached to the public. They would be an interface that could work with private individuals, private corporations that have a passion for the issues that the BLM works on.

Take, for instance, wild horses and burros. We have a big challenge that we need to get our arms around. And there are a lot of very passionate people in this country. It would be so helpful to have an external organization that could help provide public education on what we are doing, but also could help direct resources at the best place internally within the agency.

The National Park Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation do amazing work in this country and were stood up by you. We are simply seeking a similar organization. We think it could go a long ways to making a difference with some of these issues that are sometimes intractable and that a conversation is usually, the only way to get through it, and this sort of organization could help us with that.

Mr. KILMER. Great. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

Mr. Simpson.

Mr. SIMPSON. Thank you.

Welcome, Neil. It is good to see you again.

Mr. KORNZE. Good to see you.

STEENS MOUNTAIN CMPA FENCE

Mr. SIMPSON. First a statement and then a question.

Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area was created with widespread support from local stakeholders, ranchers, conservationists, and the entire Oregon delegation, many of whom still serve. This is a unique designation, and it was intended that way.

I have heard concerns from local stakeholders and my colleagues that serve from Oregon that the commitments made under the original act haven't been met by BLM. The original act seemed clear the BLM was responsible for fencing the first cow-free wilderness area in U.S. History. Yet the BLM forced one rancher to pay for fencing around their lands a few years ago, and last year, when Congress stepped in to clarify the already-clear law, the BLM still created uncertainty for future fencing responsibilities.

The list continues from there: more unintended road closures, grazing reductions, and limitations on historical access.

Why is the BLM not doing more to work with local landowners and stakeholders to implement the act, which has clear language and was written with extensive local input?

I suspect you know, my chief of staff then worked for, Congressman Greg Walden. And they are the ones worked on the Steens Mountain, and they were pretty clear on the language.

What is the BLM going to do about this?

Mr. KORNZE. I am happy to report that we are very near to finalizing an agreement with one of the local landowners that has concerns about the fence, and I think we will have a positive way to bring this to resolution. Our local office is just waiting to close it out.

Mr. SIMPSON. Okay.

SAGE-GROUSE

Let me talk for just a minute, if I can, about sage-grouse.

When Secretary Jewell testified, an issue came up which is of concern to me and not without some historical perspective on it. When we had wolves reintroduced in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, the management plan required 30 breeding pairs—10 in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming. Idaho came up with a management plan, approved by Fish and Wildlife Service. Montana did the same thing. Wyoming lagged behind and didn't pursue a State management plan. Fish and Wildlife delisted wolves in Idaho and Montana, and then a judge overturned that and said, no, it has to be in Wyoming too.

With sage-grouse, the land that we are talking about is vast and goes through many, many different States, as you well know. It kind of concerns me that—a hypothetical—Idaho does everything they can, they do everything that the BLM wants them to do, the private landowners join in, maybe some other State doesn't. Con-

sequently, the bird gets listed not just in the States that didn't do as much to try to aid in the recovery of the sage-grouse but also in Idaho that is doing everything that they can to prevent a listing. And I am just using this as an example. It could be any State.

Is that the way it is going to work? It is all or nothing? This is what Secretary Jewell indicated. And that concerns me, that you could have these differences between States. And we have no control over what another state does.

Mr. KORNZE. We have taken an everybody-at-the-table, all-in approach on this. I sit down every 2 to 3 months with representatives of each governor's office in the West of the 11 States we are working with. And, really, the idea is to make sure that we are all putting our cards on the table in a consistent fashion and moving forward together.

There are 68 plans we are revising at the Bureau of Land Management. The Forest Service has 30 plans. Nearly every State that is at the table has put forward a State plan at this point. There are a few more that are still finalizing what their approach is going to be.

But, in many ways, yes, we are all in the boat, and I think we rise and fall together.

Mr. SIMPSON. Do you find a lot of difference between the States and their willingness to address the issue? I know all States are concerned, but is there a difference among the States in what they are willing to do and how cooperative they are in trying to put together management plans for their States?

Mr. KORNZE. There does appear to be some difference, for sure. There is a difference in timing. Some States started early. Wyoming was at the table 5 or 6 years ago and actually preceded this entire process. Other States are literally putting pen to paper today. So there is a difference in that.

And there is also a difference in terms of what States are willing to require on State and private lands. So, if you looked at Oregon's plan versus, for example, Utah's plan, you would see a very different approach. And Nevada, again, has taken a wholly different approach.

Mr. SIMPSON. Yeah. I know Idaho is reluctant to bring private land into all of this, and I know that is an issue that we have been having.

You have requested—is it a \$45 million increase in this budget for sage-grouse?

Mr. KORNZE. It is——

Mr. SIMPSON. A substantial increase.

Mr. KORNZE. We request a \$45 million increase over the \$15 million base.

Mr. SIMPSON. What do you plan on doing with the \$45 million?

Mr. KORNZE. We will concentrate largely on rangeland work. We have 10 times as much pinyon-juniper in many parts of the West today as we did 100 years ago, so it is moving into what used to be sage-grouse habitat, sagebrush, our sagebrush ocean. And so dealing with that is part of it.

Green-stripping to make sure we can get ahead of fires is very important. Improving springs and seeps and riparian areas, wet meadows, that is a very big part of that.

We would also use some of the funding to ensure that we have a seed system so we can have the right seed in the right places at the right time.

So it is a little bit of everything, but we would be putting that money on the ground with our partners. Part of our commitment is that, as we finalize the sage-grouse plans, we will—we are going to do this immediately, in fact, within the next few weeks—be sitting down with the States and starting our plans for implementation.

Mr. SIMPSON. It is my understanding that the sage-grouse determination—will still be made regardless of the fiscal year 2015 language included in the so-called Cromnibus, but the rule cannot be written with the fiscal year 2015 language in place.

Will the listing determination have any impact without the existence of a written rule? And if so, what are the impacts of a determination without a rule that lists the species?

Mr. KORNZE. Those are great questions.

My understanding, as I am sure Dan Ashe pointed out, the Department has interpreted the language to mean that you cannot write it. It doesn't say you can't make a determination about the need.

Mr. SIMPSON. Right.

Mr. KORNZE. So what happens if there is a determination? I think that would lead to instability, if we have a decision made but no ability to implement it. But it also may be a major kick-starter for others to do more, as well.

Mr. SIMPSON. Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CALVERT. Just a quick comment, and then I will recognize Ms. McCollum.

You know, if we go ahead and do everything we are asked to do from this committee and the States, the localities, and the sage-grouse is still listed, it is not going to bode well for future cooperation between the States and localities and the Federal Government. So I would hope that some thought is being put into that.

Ms. McCollum.

MINERAL LEASE RENEWAL VOYAGERS N.P.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One other thing back on the mining leases. So the lease was 40 years old. There is a lot more information that has come to light. And, in talking with many others, I don't see that you, with the information that is available today about these fragile areas of the Boundary Waters and the Voyageurs, that you would even need to renew these leases in light of what we know today. So I just wanted to be clear on my opinion on that.

THREATS TO BLM EMPLOYEES

I want to talk about Mr. Bundy and the threat to BLM employees. There was a recent magazine article in Harper's Magazine; it was February of this year. And I am going to read an excerpt from it.

Quote, "On May 6, 2014, two hooded men driving a pickup truck with a masked license plate approached BLM employees driving a

load of horses and burros on a highway in Utah. They pointed a pistol at them. They held up a sign and said, 'You need to die.' The men fled, and they were never caught." And that is the end of the quote from the magazine article.

I want to say clearly, for the record, that BLM employees are serving the American people, and I want them to know that they serve with our gratitude. Their service is honorable, and it is important. And, as this story details, some of them are literally putting their lives on the line in the course of just doing their job.

As far as I am concerned, Mr. Bundy and his band of armed thugs are dangerous. They have committed acts that are criminal, by threatening Federal employees. They should be held accountable. They should be prosecuted.

So I would like you to share with us, sir, the extent to which Mr. Bundy, because he is grazing without fees—has exploited the American taxpayer. What is the impact of having literally thugs, gangs approach BLM employees just trying to do their job? What steps have been taken to stop this misuse of grazing without a permit and the threatening of Federal employees who are just doing their jobs?

Mr. KORNZE. Thank you for your statement and for the question.

My colleagues at the Bureau of Land Management do incredible work, and many of them do put their lives on the line every day when they come into the office and when they go out into the field. I couldn't be more proud of the work that they do, and we stand behind them 100 percent, 24 hours a day.

It is absolutely essential that those who have broken laws are brought to justice. These issues will remain absolutely major priorities for this agency, for this department.

So the grazing issues persist, which has been widely reported. This will be something that will continue to get my highest level of attention.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. How has this impacted employee morale, retention, or even recruitment in some of the Western areas? Have the employees without mentioning names, been talking about this?

Mr. KORNZE. We do talk about this. This is an issue that impacted the entire agency but also, I think, impacted public employees generally. Employee morale is critical, and it is something I have spent a great deal of time focusing on over the last year. I have been in a vast number of our field offices to personally engage with our employees and have conversations about this.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Well, thank you. And I will speak for myself, but I am sure I can speak for other Members of Congress: We value their employment, and we wish them safety on the job. Thank you.

Mr. KORNZE. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

WILD HORSE AND BURRO POPULATION CONTROL

Wild horses and burros, since you brought it up. The budget proposes a \$3 million increase to continue to implement the recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences for the Wild Horse and Burro Program. And we are all frustrated over this. You know, I have talked to you on numerous occasions, you know, Mr.

Simpson, obviously Mr. Stewart, those of us in the West, to get to a solution to this problem.

And at what point in the development process is a safe and cost-effective chemical contraception solution for wild horses and burros going to finally be done? We have been talking about this for years. Are we getting any closer?

Mr. KORNZE. I believe we are about to get closer.

A few years ago, I sat down with my wild horse and burro team and asked about progress on contraception, because millions of dollars have been spent. And the answer I got back was that, essentially, we still are fairly limited to what we call PZP. That is a vaccine that lasts for about a year. We don't have the ability to contact every herd every year. So it has limited support for our efforts.

We have moved out since then to restart our program in terms of research. We have engaged big universities, Big Pharmaceuticals, and asked the question, "if you were going to do a long-term approach to a vaccine that would provide long-term contraception or even sterilization, how would you go about it"? We received 20 applications in response to that question.

We have worked with the National Academy of Sciences, and we will be putting nearly \$10 million behind the top projects and hoping that we will be able to explore two key areas. One is long-term vaccines, and the other is spay and neuter techniques.

Mr. CALVERT. Obviously, spay and neutering, we do that to cats and dogs, for goodness' sake. And that is permanent. And \$10 million would spay and neuter a lot of horses. Why don't we seriously consider expanding that program and implementing it?

Mr. KORNZE. We are absolutely looking into that right now. One thing we may need help from Congress on is making sure that we have full authorities amongst all of our herds to work in that direction. So that is something we could possibly have conversations on.

Mr. CALVERT. Approximately how many horses are on the range right now?

Mr. KORNZE. About 50,000.

Mr. CALVERT. And what is your opinion as to how many horses can the range effectively handle?

Mr. KORNZE. Our internal recommendation is that the range should have probably no more than 26,000 or 27,000 horses on it.

Mr. CALVERT. So we have roughly twice as many. And the population is obviously growing.

Mr. KORNZE. It is.

Mr. CALVERT. Significantly. And what is the conflict of these wild horses, you know, obviously too many horses, on the sage-grouse?

Mr. KORNZE. There are certainly impacts. There are impacts from many types of uses of the public lands, but this is one that we need to get our arms around. Whether it is pinyon-juniper or wild horses and burros or the impacts of fire, all of these areas of concern need to be wrapped into our sage-grouse efforts.

Mr. CALVERT. How many horses right now do we have confined that we are taking care of?

Mr. KORNZE. About an equal share, 50,000.

Mr. CALVERT. 50,000 horses.

Mr. KORNZE. Yeah.

Mr. CALVERT. And how many horses a year are being adopted?

Mr. KORNZE. About 10 years ago, we were adopting out roughly 10,000 horses a year. We are down to about 2,000 horses now.

Mr. CALVERT. And how many horses are being added every year?

Mr. KORNZE. It depends on our ability to get out and apply the PZP, but, it does grow at a good clip.

Mr. CALVERT. So it is accurate to say that you have more horses going in than you have going out.

Mr. KORNZE. Absolutely.

The cost of this is something that I think would be helpful to have a real public dialogue about. From the day we take a horse off the range to the day it expires, usually in a long-term, open pasture facility in the Midwest, we spend as taxpayers about \$45,000 on that horse. Now, that is a good college education.

So I think there is a lot of room for innovation in terms of getting those horses into the hands of good owners and good homes.

Mr. CALVERT. Yeah. I would bet that if a lot of American citizens understood what we are paying for this they would be somewhat upset. I think that is one of the reasons why we have to get control of this and get control of this quickly.

GRAZING PERMIT RENEWALS

Okay. Any—Mr. Simpson.

Mr. SIMPSON. Yeah, I want to get back to something on the grazing permits. We have about 1,800 come due a year. We can process about 1,400. So the backlog grows about 400 a year.

What happens—I think I know the answer to this, but I would like to make sure I do—what happens to those 400 who you don't get to?

Mr. KORNZE. Legislation was passed in December as part of the NDAA that allows us to continue those folks going forward under their existing conditions.

Mr. SIMPSON. Do you get sued about allowing them to go forward? Are there lawsuits brought about allowing them to go forward without EAs or whatever is necessary? Or is that—can you do that?

Mr. KORNZE. We have had challenges in recent years to some of the riders that this committee has put in place—

Mr. SIMPSON. Right.

Mr. KORNZE [continuing]. And that we have used. We have not seen litigation yet based on what was put forward in December, but, it wouldn't be a shock if it took place.

Mr. SIMPSON. Yeah.

Secretary Salazar once told this committee that he was the defendant in over 3,000 lawsuits. While I firmly agree with the public having the right to have a say in how their public lands are managed, it would really be nice if we could take a majority of those funds that are used in lawsuits and actually use them to manage the lands. Because it is a lot of money. That is kind of a pipe dream of mine.

But a lot of the lawsuits are process lawsuits. We create processes to do things that are susceptible to lawsuits at every step of the way. So it is not necessarily the outcome. We can sue about this process; you didn't do this when you should have done that. And we really need some reforms of the whole—NEPA and other

laws, to accomplish what we want to accomplish. We need to allow the public to have a say in how their public lands are managed but not open it up to lawsuits every single step of the way somehow. That is a dream, but I am a dreamer, I guess.

Let me also say that I concur with Ms. McCollum's comments about the BLM employees. The people that we work with in Idaho are great people trying to do a tough job. Of course, everyone can manage better than the people that are currently there. If someone else managed it, we would be upset with them all the time. It is the nature of the job. But this went far beyond what we expect our employees to have to put up with, so they are good people.

Again, I would strongly encourage the BLM to work with local stakeholders in the Steens Cooperative Management Area and resolve those issues that might exist out there.

So thank you for being here today.

Mr. KORNZE. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. Ms. McCollum.

OIL AND GAS INSPECTION FEE

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chair, I would like to go back and just ask a couple of questions about the new inspection fee for onshore and offshore oil and gas producers.

You have a plan of how you would put this to work. So how do you propose these fees compare with the benefit that the industry receives from developing public land? The industry is getting profit out of public land. What is the consequence of not having a fee structure in place so that you can go out there and do the inspections that need to be done to protect the American taxpayer? Quite frankly, by the leases moving forward, the public is allowing these companies to make quite a bit of profit off of something that is collectively held by the public?

Mr. KORNZE. I think you put it well in your opening when you said it is a user fee. You use it, you pay for it.

Our goal here is to make sure we are not getting anything more than a basic ability to do the work we have been requested to do by Congress, to make sure we have a safe and responsible oil and gas program. And so, we need 220 inspectors, at least, to cover 100,000 wells. We have mineral assets that we oversee in all 50 States, and there are more than 30 States that have active oil and gas leases. So it is a vast, vast responsibility.

Our goal is that we can keep this industry, which helped with the American recovery, going but, at the same time, respect the fact that this is a major industrial activity on public lands and it needs the oversight that is part of our rules and regulations and the laws that have been passed by Congress.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you.

Mr. CALVERT. As you know, Mr. Kornze, the authorizing committees, once again—I am sure you have contacted the authorizing committees, the Ways and Means Committee and the Natural Resources authorizing committees to make that type of language. I know that people are looking for the Appropriations Committee to resolve all these issues, but that is not what we are supposed to do, though we do do it from time to time, but—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Chair, here is the catch-22. The authorizing committee has authorized that leases go out. BLM puts leases out. But where is the quid pro quo for the user fee?

Maybe they should stop doing leases, then, if we can't do the inspections. But I don't think anybody wants that to happen. So how do we get the authorizing committee to do their job? Because if we don't, we are cutting other things in the budget, like wild horses.

Mr. CALVERT. That is a great question. Actually, I wrote the authorizing language for the deepwater oil way long time ago, which created fees and so forth, and that is the way it should be done. And we are certainly encouraging the authorizing committees to do a number of things right now, whether it is the Land and Water Conservation Fund or—

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Yeah.

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

Mr. CALVERT [continuing]. PILT or Secure Rural Schools or a number of these issues that we have to deal with. But I understand the frustration.

There is another frustration—one last question. Hydraulic fracturing regulation. At last year's hearing, you mentioned the plans to issue final regulations for hydraulic fracturing, and we were told it would be finalized in late 2014. So I am sure it is all done and ready to go, right?

OIL AND GAS INSPECTION FEE

Mr. KORNZE. Well, so on the fee topic—and then I will get to hydraulic fracturing—I do think it is useful to point out that what we are requesting is exactly how it works offshore. So if you have a rig out in the Gulf of Mexico, you pay a user fee for the appropriate Federal agency to come inspect your facility. And it works for everyone; you move on.

We are talking about a fee onshore that would be for most leaseholders about \$1,000 a year. We are talking about folks that have the ability to invest sometimes \$8 million to \$12 million to drill a well and clearly are making back that and a healthy sum more.

We hope we can work with you and the authorizers in Ways and Means, if necessary, to step forward and make sure there is no question about whether or not we are doing our full slate of inspections.

The amount of safety and environmental oversight we do should not be dependent upon year-to-year appropriations. I think we could probably all agree on that. Between the year 2011 and 2013, we saw a major drop in our oil and gas funding that comes to us from Congress. As a result, we had to restrict a lot of our work, whether it be on inspections or APD work.

I hope we can find a path forward, and I appreciate the time to talk about that.

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

On hydraulic fracturing, stay tuned. As the Secretary committed to earlier this week, in the days ahead we think we will be able to share that with you.

Mr. CALVERT. A few days. A few days probably, right?

I want to thank you for coming here today. And I want to also, along with Ms. McCollum and Mr. Simpson, thank all your employees at BLM. They do a great job for this country. And we are certainly interested in having a safe working environment and that they continue to do the good work that they are doing.

So, with that, have a great day.

Mr. KORNZE. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, committee.

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
FY16 Budget Hearing: Bureau of Land Management
March 19, 2015

Questions for the Record—Director of the Bureau of Land Management

Questions from Mr. Calvert

Sage-Grouse

BLM has requested a \$45,000,000 increase in order to implement its sage-grouse conservation plans. The Committee needs additional information on how the agency plans to allocate and spend this money in order to make a good funding recommendation.

Calvert Q1: Please provide a list of the 68 Resource Management Plans. Include their location and completion status.

Answer: The BLM is amending Resource Management Plans in 68 planning areas as part of the National Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy and completing 6 plan revisions. All amendments and revisions will be completed and records of decision (RODs) will be signed this summer.

Listed below are the 68 pending plan amendments by State and affected planning areas:

Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-Regional Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment/EIS:

- **BLM California RMP Amendments:** Alturas, Eagle Lake, and Surprise.
- **BLM Nevada RMP Amendments:** Black Rock, Desert-High Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Carson City, Elko, Ely, Paradise-Denio, Shoshone-Eureka, Tonopha, and Wells.

Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Regional Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment/EIS:

- **BLM Idaho RMP Amendments:** Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, Bruneau, Challis, Craters of the Moon National Monument, Cascade, Kuna, Jarbidge, Lemhi, Owyhee, Pocatello, Bennett Hills/Toimmerican Hills, Cassia, Magic, Monument, Sun Valley, Twin Falls, Big Lost, Medicine Lodge, Big Desert, and Little Lost-Birch Creek.
- **BLM Montana RMP Amendments:** Dillon.

Utah Sub-Regional Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment/EIS:

- **BLM Utah RMP Amendments:** Kanab, Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, Richfield, Price, Vernal, Pinyon, Cedar-Beaver-Garfield-Antimony, House Range, Warm Springs, Box Elder, Pony Express, Randolph, and Park City.

Oregon Sub-Regional Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment/EIS:

- **BLM Oregon RMP Amendments:** Upper Deschutes, Brothers-La Pine, Three Rivers, Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area, Andrews Management Area, Southeast Oregon, Baker, and Lakeview.

Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment/EIS:

- **BLM Colorado RMP Amendments:** Grand Junction, White River, Kremmling, Colorado River Valley, and Little Snake.

Lewiston Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment/EIS:

- **BLM Montana/Dakotas RMP Amendments:** Headwaters and Judith.

North Dakota Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendments/EIS:

- **BLM Montana/Dakotas:** North Dakota.

Nine-Plan Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment/EIS:

- **BLM Wyoming RMP Amendments:** Pinedale, Kemmerer, Rock Springs, Rawlins, Casper, and Newcastle.

Listed below are the six plan revisions by State and affected planning areas:

Wyoming: Bighorn Basin and Buffalo

South Dakota: South Dakota

Montana: Miles City, Billings and Hiline

Calvert Q2: How much funding is proposed to be allocated to each plan in FY 2016? Please provide a chart with this information.

Answer: The BLM has not yet determined the funding allocations to each of the revised and amended land use plans in fiscal year 2016. That determination will be made following completion of the plans, and consultation with partners, including the States, at which time the BLM will share allocation information with the Subcommittee. Generally, the funds will allow the BLM and its many partners to take meaningful steps forward to restore rangelands, minimize the threat of wildfire, control invasive plants and improve riparian areas, such as selected removal of encroaching pinyon and juniper. Plan implementation will strategically focus on the priority habitat and will leverage existing State, Federal and other partnerships.

Calvert Q3: Please provide a break-out by activity, such as conservation measure implementation, assessment, monitoring, travel management, and inventory, of how funding will be allocated in FY 2016.

Answer: The actual allocation of funds awaits completion of the land use plans. However, of the \$60 million in the budget for sage grouse conservation, \$15.0 million is recurring base funding in the Wildlife Management subactivity and a \$45.0 million requested increase is split between the Wildlife Management subactivity (\$37.0 million) and the Resource Management Planning, Assessment and Monitoring subactivity (\$8.0 million). The BLM anticipates that approximately \$43 million would be directed towards efforts to: (1) protect and restore and reconnect high priority sagebrush habitat; (2) remove invasive species and seed with desirable species; and (3) protect high priority habitat from wildfire and restore burned areas back into

healthy landscapes. Approximately \$15 million would be used for the monitoring and assessment of habitat, and the remaining \$2 million would be used for coordination, training, and outreach/education efforts with the Western Governors Association, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, collaborators, and the general public. The estimated \$15.0 million that would be used for monitoring and assessment work includes a combination of the \$8.0 million increase requested in the Resource Management Planning, Assessment and Monitoring subactivity and \$7.0 million of base funds in the Wildlife Management subactivity.

Calvert Q4: Please provide an example of a plan and its proposed activities and associated funding.

Answer: The BLM proposed land use plan revisions and amendments are being finalized. They will be available to the public early this summer, and we anticipate that RODs will be signed later this summer.

One major focus of the BLM's efforts for the conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat is addressed in the recently completed Fire and Invasives Assessments. These assessments identify priority locations for implementing activities that address the threat of wildfire and invasive species. These activities will be implemented as funding becomes available. The assessments are available on the BLM website at:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/documents_and_resources.html.

Calvert Q5: If possible, please provide a State-by-State break out of how the funds will be allocated for implementation in FY 2016.

Answer: The BLM has not yet determined funding allocations to each of the revised and amended land use plans in FY 2016. That determination will be made following completion of the plans, at which time the BLM commits to sharing allocation information with the Subcommittee.

Calvert Q6: Does BLM anticipate that Federal staff will implement on-the-ground conservation measures on BLM land or will the work be contracted to private companies and/or partners?

Answer: The BLM envisions an ongoing collaborative effort with the States and partners as the land use plans are implemented. The BLM anticipates that implementation of on-the-ground conservation projects will be accomplished with stakeholders and partners to better leverage funding and accomplish successful conservation in priority areas. The BLM also anticipates contracting with private companies and/or partners to complete some of the on-the-ground work.

Calvert Q7: How much of the \$45 million in funding that was requested will be used for coordination with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and partners?

Answer: Of the \$45 million increase requested, \$2 million would be used specifically for coordination, training, and outreach/education efforts with the Western Governors Association, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, collaborators, and the general public. However, the BLM's goal is to strive for a collaborative and unified approach among Federal agencies,

Tribal governments, State and local governments, and other stakeholders for sage-grouse conservation as it implements its plans. It is anticipated that much of this funding will be used in some manner for coordination among partners as the process continues to move forward.

Calvert Q8: Does BLM anticipate that any of the additional funding would be used for litigation expenses?

Answer: The \$45 million request does not include funding to cover litigation expenses and the BLM does not anticipate using any of the requested funds for this purpose.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Calvert Q9: Please provide a description of the activities supported by BLM's Threatened and Endangered Species Management program

Answer: The BLM's Threatened and Endangered Species Program is dedicated to ensuring the conservation and recovery of the 400 federally listed species and 100 candidate species found on BLM-administered lands. The program also provides support for conservation of non-listed, rare plant species. Its mission is to implement conservation programs to achieve species recovery so protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is no longer required for currently listed species, and so that listing under the ESA is unnecessary for Bureau sensitive plants or Federal candidate species.

The BLM's successful conservation of these species requires implementation of the following activities:

1. Cooperative planning with States and other stakeholders in the preparation of recovery plans and development of conservation strategies for targeted species;
2. Implementing actions identified in species conservation and recovery plans, including collaborative conservation efforts with States and other partners;
3. Conducting inventories for newly listed, proposed and candidate species; and,
4. Monitoring species populations to determine if objectives identified in species conservation and recovery plans are being met.

Calvert Q10: Please provide a chart showing the allocation of funds to these activities.

Answer: For the 2016 President's budget, 85 percent of the \$21.6 million requested for the T&E program is directed toward BLM execution of the four activities listed above. Internally, these activities are not separated for budgeting purposes. The remaining 15 percent goes towards specific one-time directed projects that may also support crosscutting Bureau programs such as National Historic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Healthy Lands.

Calvert Q11: Please provide additional information on the funding used for recovery; consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service; coordination with other Federal, state and local agencies and partners; and for planning purposes?

Answer: The primary goal of the T&E Species program is to recover Federally-listed species and preclude the need to list candidate species. The approach for the recovery of listed species is generally detailed in recovery plans, completed for nearly 85 percent of listed species. These plans are developed under the leadership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service. The BLM is typically a stakeholder in developing the recovery plans for species that depend on habitat managed by the agency. In implementing recovery plans, the BLM works with partners such as State fish and game agencies, other Federal agencies and non-governmental agencies. Partners may provide expertise, labor, or funds to help recover a species. Recovery actions include monitoring of populations, restoring or maintaining suitable habitat, conducting research to understand and address threats to the species, and participating in efforts to establish new populations. One tool used by BLM in the recovery of species is the T&E Species Recovery Fund, which is described in the response to Question 12 below. However, this \$1.0 million Recovery Fund represents just a fraction of the total funding in BLM's T&E Species Management program used for recovery efforts.

In terms of consultation, under Section 7 of the ESA, the BLM must consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service whenever it determines that an action it authorizes, funds, or carries out, may affect a listed species. The BLM does not separately track funding used to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service or to coordinate with other agencies and partners on matters related to compliance under the ESA for specific projects or activities. These consultations are included in the overall expenses associated with the planning and permitting of specific projects. These expenses are not included in the \$21.6 million for the T&E program; they are covered by the benefitting subactivity, for example, the Oil and Gas Management subactivity would cover the consultation costs associated with oil and gas permitting.

This consultation is informed, however, by inventory and monitoring information collected through the T&E program. Additionally, implementation of recovery efforts for federally listed and candidate species through the T&E program bolsters the resiliency of the species on the ground, which may offer benefits to other BLM priority portfolio programs such as energy development, mineral extraction, range management, wild horse and burro management, forestry management, and recreation.

Calvert Q12: Please describe the purpose and results of the Recovery Fund.

Answer: The BLM uses the Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Fund to support the recovery of candidate and listed species. This fund helps strategically target key recovery tasks on BLM-administered public land that would preclude the need to list a candidate species or result in a delisting or down-listing of a federally listed species. The BLM works closely with the Fish and Wildlife Service to achieve these objectives and to focus funds where species recovery would be optimized.

The fund was established in 2010 and awards approximately \$1.0 million annually, on a competitive basis, for recovery actions. This recovery fund has supported significant species recovery efforts in the field, but BLM's recovery successes extend beyond the funding associated with this initiative. Through the efforts of BLM biologists and the leveraging of funds from partners, the program has achieved a number of successes in species conservation. In 2014

alone, seven candidate species were precluded from listing due in part to the BLM's conservation efforts.

For instance, in August 2014, the Fish and Wildlife Service announced that the Arctic Grayling in Montana was deemed unwarranted for Federal listing. To date, the BLM has contributed approximately \$250,000 towards grayling restoration efforts in southwest Montana. Funds have been used to conduct population monitoring, restore riparian areas, install riparian fencing, and support grayling reintroduction efforts in the Upper Ruby River drainage. The Fish and Wildlife Service also withdrew Least Chub from the candidate list and concluded that conservation efforts have reduced or eliminated current and future threats to the fish. The BLM's participation was notable because three of five naturally occurring populations of the fish are on BLM-administered public land. The other successes include eight species that have been either precluded from listing (Sand Dune Lizard and Coral Pink Sand Dunes Tiger Beetle), delisted (Maguire Daisy and Inyo California Towhee) or recommended for down listing (Beach Layia, Stephen's Kangaroo Rat, San Benito Evening Primrose and Borax Lake Chub).

Energy

Calvert Q13: Please describe how the agency's new regulation regarding hydraulic fracturing accounts for the regulatory actions taken by States.

Answer: The Department recognizes many States have their own regulations regarding hydraulic fracturing. Recognizing the expertise and experience that State and tribal authorities possess, and consistent with BLM's standard practice of ensuring the efficient implementation of its rules, the final rule includes provisions for States to request a variance when specific State regulations are equal to or more protective than the BLM's rules.

The BLM State Offices are in the process of meeting with their State counterparts to identify opportunities for variances and establish Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that will ensure efficient regulatory oversight of oil and gas development on Federal lands. These include: the North Dakota Industrial Commission; the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission; and the States of Alaska, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah. The BLM will also be presenting the rule at the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission's next meeting.

Calvert Q14: How many States that also contain land managed by the Bureau have hydraulic fracturing regulations in place?

Answer: As of March, 25, 2015, the Department estimated fifteen (15) States: Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Illinois, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming have regulations in place specifically addressing hydraulic fracturing operations. Some of these regulations are expected to meet or exceed the objectives of the BLM rule, but the specific rules and provisions vary from State-to-State. As explained above, the BLM is in the process of working with its State counterparts to evaluate these requirements and identify opportunities for enhancing efficiencies through the variance process.

Calvert Q15: Which States have regulations that are consistent with BLM's new regulation? Which States do not?

Answer: The BLM developed the rule to apply to all hydraulic fracturing operations occurring on Federal or Indian oil and gas resources on a nationwide basis. The BLM is currently working with its State counterparts to establish MOUs that will realize efficiencies and to identify opportunities for variances.

Calvert Q16: Please describe how BLM works with States to ensure sufficient and efficient regulation and to avoid duplicative regulatory regimes?

Answer: The BLM has established and maintained regulations governing oil and gas operations on public lands for decades, and has worked successfully with operators, Tribes and State governments to avoid duplication and delays in the enforcement and monitoring of these regulations. The implementation of the recently issued hydraulic fracturing rule will continue this longstanding practice while also ensuring the BLM satisfies its obligations to ensure Federal standards are met. The rule builds upon and updates the BLM's existing regulations to address an evolving technology, in order to provide consistent parameters to conduct hydraulic fracturing operations on BLM-managed public lands nationwide and Indian trust lands.

For example, the BLM California State Office has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the California Department of Conservation, Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR). The purposes of the MOU are to delineate procedures for regulating oil field operations where both the BLM and DOGGR have jurisdictional authority to streamline operations and minimize duplication. As part of its implementation of the rule, the BLM State Offices are meeting with their other State counterparts to identify opportunities for variances and establish MOUs.

Native Plants

Calvert Q17: How much funding was allocated in FY 2014 and 2015 for the Native Plant Materials Development Program? What are the sources of those funds?

Answer: Funding from the Native Plant Materials Development program in 2014 and 2015 totaled \$11.1 million and \$8.0 million, respectively. In 2014, approximately \$3.5 million was provided from the Department as a result of the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013. Program resources by subactivity are listed below.

Subactivity	2014	2015
(dollars in thousands)		
Soil, Water and Air Management	\$3,000	\$3,000
Wildlife Management	\$4,600	\$5,000
Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013 (Funds allocated to BLM in FY 2014)	\$3,500	\$0
Total	\$11,100	\$8,000

Calvert Q18: Please update the information provided in the FY 2015 hearing record describing in detail the activities funded through this program. (Question provided for reference. Calvert Q33: Please describe in detail the activities funded.)

Answer: The BLM's Native Plant Materials Development program works within eco-regions across the western United States by collecting native seed to use in the development of native plant crops for restoration of native plant communities after wildfire, invasive weed removal, and other land disturbances. The program focuses on restoration species and has made about 16,000 collections of more than 5,000 species in its 12-year history. Annually, the program makes approximately 1,500 seed collections and works with hundreds of partners including other Federal agencies, private businesses, and non-governmental organizations on the various phases of native plant development. To develop a crop from wildland seed can take 10 to 20 years of research, and most native plants have not had the necessary research done to ensure that a private grower can grow them commercially. This important program works to fast-track this process by working with an array of partners on thousands of native plant species across the different Western eco-regions.

Under the national leadership of the BLM, the Native Plant Materials Development Program has been working since 2001 to develop high quality seeds and seedlings of America's native plant species for restoration, rehabilitation, and reclamation. From the outset, this program has included the following activities:

- Native Seed Collection
- Long-term Conservation Seed Banking
- Evaluation and Development
- Field Establishment
- Commercial Seed Production
- Guidance on Seed Transfer Zones
- Post Production Seed Storage
- Restoration of Native Plant Communities
- Production of Sagebrush Steppe Seed

In addition, the program is working on technology transfer of the research and issues focused on native plant materials development and seed for restoration. Specifically, the program supported a webinar series entitled "The Right Seed in the Right Place at the Right Time." The webinar covers the following topics: seed zones; seed production; restoration equipment; seed mixes; seed weather; and container stock. The series is open to the public and is available online at http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/1146098/26123004/1428528986000/2015-01_SeedingSeries.pdf?token=ygk%2B5P%2B0zS11Gr5oP5CgzzJ%2B8yE%3D

The BLM also supported and developed a special issue of the Natural Areas Journal entitled "Using Native Plant Materials in Restoration." Finally, the program supported and organized with the Institute for Applied Ecology the 3rd National Native Seed Conference which had over 320 participants from more than 10 countries.

Calvert Q19: Has BLM considered proposing that the Native Plant Materials Development Program be a single budget subactivity or line item? What is BLM's opinion of this idea?

Answer: Across its programs, BLM actively considers updating budget structures to see if changes can create greater efficiencies and increase program effectiveness. Vegetation restoration is multifaceted and none of the components, such as the Native Plant Program and Invasive Species Management, stand alone. To be successful in maintaining land health and restoring native plant communities, the BLM must take a comprehensive approach, one that includes developing native seed and plant materials, invasive species control, site preparation, planting/seeding or other site treatments, and monitoring of the results.

Calvert Q20: What is BLM's role in the Native Seed Strategy?

Answer: The BLM led the initiation and development of the National Seed Strategy. This has involved working across 12 Federal agencies, tribal, State and local governments as well as with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The BLM is also developing a business plan identifying the costs associated with implementing the National Seed Strategy. This business plan will be considered in future budget development.

Calvert Q21: How many staff support this effort?

Answer: The BLM Plant Conservation Program has one dedicated position (FTE) and two full time contractors who assist with the program. Additional staff contribute to this work on a part-time or collateral duty basis.

Calvert Q22: How much funding does BLM anticipate allocating to this activity in FY 2016?

Answer: In 2016, the BLM plans to allocate a total of \$7.6 million for the Plant Conservation Program. Approximately \$3.0 million will come from the Soil, Water and Air Management subactivity. The remaining \$4.6 million will come from the Wildlife Management subactivity.

In 2014, the Committee worked with BLM to expedite the release of emergency stabilization funds so that BLM could buy seed and begin replanting in areas affected by fire.

Calvert Q23: Please update the Committee on the progress made toward improving the process.

Answer: The BLM has the authority to approve emergency stabilization requests. The BLM continues to work closely with the Department's Office of Wildland Fire to identify emergency stabilization process improvements.

Calvert Q24: Do state directors have the flexibility they need to procure seed and begin the rehabilitation process?

Answer: Seed can be acquired several ways, but the two most common practices are through the BLM seed warehouse system, or through a consolidated purchase. The goal of the seed warehouse system is to stock commonly used seeds for post fire and other vegetation management treatments so that the right seed is available at the right time for the right location. If seed is in stock at the warehouse, it is available instantly to be mixed or shipped to the location needed. On the other hand, if seed has to be acquired, a number of factors, including demand by other parties and the seed production decisions made by seed providers earlier in the season can impede BLM's flexibility in procuring the seed and beginning the rehabilitation process.

Calvert Q25: What are the best practices for beginning the rehabilitation process? Does BLM meet these best practices?

Answer: The best practices for post fire rehabilitation rely heavily on the site conditions. The BLM is working to engage the scientific community to better understand vegetation dynamics and ways in which to best compete with invasive annual grasses and other weeds that could possibly dominate native plant communities. The BLM plans for average conditions and may accept higher risk treatments to rehabilitate ecologically sensitive areas.

Calvert Q26: How much time does it take, on average, for a State director to procure seed and begin the rehabilitation process in FY 2015?

Answer: If seed is in stock at the warehouse, it is available instantly to be mixed or shipped to the location needed. If seed has to be acquired, a number of factors, including demand by other parties and the seed production decisions made by seed providers earlier in the season can determine the time it will take to have the seed delivered to where it is needed. The availability of certain types of seed on the open market can be problematic, and because demand is driven by wildfire occurrence, predictability of the need for these seeds is low. The BLM procures the most seed in late summer, corresponding to the post wildfire needs. The solicitation goes out in early August, and by early September, contract awards are made, with delivery generally occurring in mid to late September. Additional seed purchases for shrubs can be made in October and November based on the current year's seed crop available to harvest in late fall.

Calvert Q27: Please describe BLM's relationship with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and its Plant Materials Centers. Does BLM utilize the Plant Materials Centers?

Answer: The BLM has a very significant and collaborative relationship with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and its Plant Materials Centers (PMCs). The BLM works very closely with all 10 of the PMCs in the West. BLM is cooperating with the Los Lunas PMC, which is working on production of five different native plant species, as well as, working on modifying a vacuum seed harvester to perform as a high power forage harvester of native seed crops. Additionally, the Tucson PMC is working on nine native plant species, identifying the germination protocols for each species and developing the production and harvesting protocols for growing them as commercial crops. The seed produced from these trials will be used for distribution to commercial growers, use in demonstration sites or research projects. These are just a few of the examples of the type of work we are doing with the NRCS PMCs.

Wild Horses and Burros

Calvert Q28: Please describe in detail BLM's plan to support research to control the population of wild horse and burros. How much funding will be dedicated to this activity? What are the sources of the funding?

Answer: In 2015, BLM is continuing or initiating a suite of 16 research studies aimed at developing new or improved methods of spay/neuter and contraception vaccines for wild horses and burros at an estimated cost of \$9.2 million. Seven other studies and projects will complement and supplement population control research at a cost of approximately \$3.6 million, for a total of approximately \$12.8 million. The total includes \$2.0 million in animal capture costs to support the studies. The total of \$12.8 million for these studies includes both 2014 and 2015 appropriations. Most of these costs are borne by the Wild Horse and Burro Management subactivity; two benefitting subactivities (Rangeland Management and T&E Species Management) also contributed funds. These studies will be conducted by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), various universities and several contractors over the next five years.

Calvert Q29: How many research grants does the agency anticipate funding in FY 2015 and FY 2016?

Answer: As previously noted, the 16 research studies described in the previous response have been funded using FY 2014 and FY 2015 funds. They are multi-year studies that will continue into 2016 and beyond. Additional population control field trials would be initiated in FY 2016 with the \$3.0 million requested increase for implementing National Academy of Sciences recommendations.

Calvert Q30: How many population control applications does BLM plan to do in FY 2015 and FY 2016? What methods will be used?

Answer: About 600 wild horse mares will be vaccinated with PZP vaccine in FY 2015. Work plans for FY 2016 have not been finalized but they will include research field trial spay/neuter treatments along with an undetermined number of PZP vaccinations.

Calvert Q31: Are wild horses and burros on the range negatively affecting sage-grouse and/or sage brush habitat? How does BLM prioritize horses vs. habitat when there are conflicts?

Answer: The BLM manages wild horses and burros on approximately 14.6 million acres of sage-grouse habitat predominantly in Nevada, southwest Wyoming and southeast Oregon. According to a 2013 USGS report entitled "Summary of Science, Activities, Programs, and Policies That Influence the Rangeland Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse," overpopulation of wild horses and burros can contribute to degradation and fragmentation of sagebrush-steppe habitat, though the precise nature and scale of these impacts is unclear. Monitoring data is being collected to better understand this relationship. Land use conflicts are resolved through the BLM's land use planning process.

Calvert Q32: BLM has been criticized in the past regarding its estimates of wild horses and burros on the range. What is that status of BLM's estimates? Have improvements been made?

Answer: The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) 2013 Report found that the BLM's wild horse and burro estimates may have undercounted numbers by as much as 20 to 30 percent on a national basis. The NAS recommended that the BLM use new population survey methods developed by the United States Geological Survey that utilize statistical analysis to account for animals that are undetected during aerial survey flights. In 2014, the BLM began using the recommended methods and completed new surveys in 77 of the 179 herd management areas (HMAs). The BLM intends to continue to use the new methods and survey one third of the HMAs annually on a rolling basis. The BLM reports national on-range population estimates annually. The 2014 estimate was 49,209 and the data for 2015 will be published by June 1.

Calvert Q33: How accurate are the agency's estimates? How frequently are the estimates conducted? When was the last one conducted?

Answer: The 2013 NAS Report concluded that the BLM's estimates may have undercounted the wild horse and burro population by as much as 20 to 30 percent. Following the recommendations in the report, the BLM began using new population survey methods developed by USGS in 2014. Seventy-seven of the 179 herd management areas have been surveyed using this new method. The BLM plans to continue using this method to survey one-third of the HMAs annually. The BLM reports on-range population estimates annually. The data for 2015 will be published by June 1.

Calvert Q34: Does BLM plan to remove wild horses and burros from the range in FY 2015? Please also describe the agency's plan for FY 2015 and FY 2016 and include information regarding its priority for removals.

Answer: About 2,500 removals are planned in FY 2015. Priorities for these removals are based on court orders, settlement agreements, requests for removals from private lands, research implementation and greater-sage grouse habitat considerations. Removal plans for FY 2016 are being reevaluated due to rising holding costs.

Calvert Q35: What is BLM's plan for FY 2016?

Answer: Plans for changes and improvements to the program in FY 2016 include: continuing research studies aimed at developing more effective population control methods; decreasing holding expenses by transferring animals out of expensive corrals to new, less expensive contracted pastures; increasing adoptions by providing more trained animals through agreements with non-profit organizations and prisons; and continuing work with the Office of Science and Technology Policy and a variety of stakeholders to develop a Prize Challenge to find alternative ways to deliver a liquid vaccine (such as PZP) to wild horses and burros on western rangelands.

Cost of Litigation

Calvert Q36: How much did BLM allocate for litigation costs in FY 2014 and FY 2015 (estimated)?

Answer: The BLM does not allocate separate funding for litigation costs. Rather, such costs are born by all of BLM's accounts, both discretionary and mandatory, including the three annual appropriations accounts – Management of Lands and Resources, Oregon and California Grant Lands, and Range Improvements – and the Department's Wildland Fire Management account, from which BLM receives an allocation. The Department's Office of the Solicitor reported that in FY 2014, the Department made payments of slightly more than \$1.0 million for BLM cases under the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA).

In FY 2015, the BLM is implementing a new policy that will allow it to better track the costs of natural resource-related administrative reviews and litigation, including the payment of attorney fees and expenses. As part of this effort, the BLM has provided guidance to all offices to ensure diligence and accuracy in the coding of litigation costs.

Calvert Q37: What accounts supported these costs?

Answer: As explained above, all of the BLM's accounts, both discretionary and mandatory, support the costs of litigation.

Human Capital

In January 2014, GAO reported that Interior continues to face challenges hiring and retaining the staff it needs to oversee oil and gas development on federal leases. GAO recommended that Interior expand its use of recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives and collect and analyze hiring data to look for ways to streamline the hiring process.

Calvert Q38: Please update the Committee on BLM's efforts to improve hiring and retention and adopting alternative approaches to hire and retain personnel.

Answer: The BLM continues to use existing Recruitment, Retention and Relocation authorities (3R), as well as temporary special pay authorities to enhance the recruitment and retention of petroleum engineers and petroleum engineering technicians engaged in oil and gas development operations and activities. In FY 2014, the BLM implemented its Congressionally-authorized Special Pay Rate for its Petroleum Engineers (PEs) and Petroleum Engineering Technicians (PETs), equal to the GS non-locality base rate plus 25 percent, or their current locality rate, whichever is higher. Affected BLM employees realized a nearly 11 percent increase in pay. The BLM also established a bureau-wide 10 percent group retention incentive for all PEs and PETs and implemented mandatory 10 percent recruitment and relocation incentives for PEs and PETs in its critical duty stations – Anchorage, AK; Bakersfield, CA; Billings, MT; Carlsbad, NM; Casper, WY; Dickenson, ND; Hobbs, NM; Pinedale, WY; Santa Fe, NM; Vernal, UT; and Washington, DC. In addition, the BLM has increased the use of student loan repayments for mission critical energy occupations. Finally, the BLM has expanded its use of various special

hiring authorities and programs, including the Vets-2-Feds Initiative; the Veteran's Disability Hiring Program; and the Pathways Program to further augment its existing competitive-service hiring efforts.

Calvert Q39: Does BLM need any additional authority to address these issues?

Answer: Federal authority currently exists. The BLM, along with other DOI bureaus, is working with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to establish permanent special pay authority for a number of professional and technical positions directly engaged in the oversight of Federal oil and gas operations, with a particular attention to those located in areas where specialized skills are in high demand.

Data Center Consolidation

Calvert Q40: How many data centers has the agency consolidated over the past three fiscal years? What is the savings associated with the consolidation?

Answer: Since 2011, the BLM has reduced the number of data centers from 51 to 14, achieving a 73 percent reduction resulting in a total \$4.5 million of savings. Savings have been reinvested into BLM mission areas.

Calvert Q41: How many additional data centers will be consolidated in FY 2016 and future fiscal years and what are the anticipated savings associated with these actions?

Answer: In 2016, the BLM plans to close 12 of the remaining data centers, which will achieve the BLM's reduction goal of 51 to 2 data centers. Although the amount of savings is site specific, the BLM anticipates an average savings of \$121,000 per site, resulting in additional savings of \$1.4 million. In total, nearly \$6.0 million in savings from data center efforts will be reinvested into BLM mission areas.

Fire Retardant

Calvert Q42: How much did the agency spend on fire retardant in FY 2014 and FY 2015 (estimated)?

Answer: The funding BLM spends on fire retardant is from its allocation of the Department's Wildland Fire Management appropriation. It is also important to clarify that the retardant BLM purchases is used on all fires BLM responds to, not just fires on BLM land. That includes fires on non-Federal land and fires on lands administered by other Federal agencies. Fiscal Year 2014 was an abnormally low year for retardant use compared to previous fire seasons, as BLM spent only \$4.1 million. By contrast, BLM's retardant expenditures in 2012 and 2013 were \$9.8 million and \$9.9 million, respectively. There is no reliable means to estimate the amount BLM will spend on retardant in 2015 since the Western fire season is just getting underway.

Questions from Mr. Stewart**Alton Coal**

I want to thank you for the time you have taken on the Alton Coal issue that we have discussed a few times. As you informed me this week, we are now waiting on the State's evaluation of the suitability criteria for coal leasing on these lands.

Stewart Q1: Mr. Kornze, can you confirm that if the BLM finds the area unsuitable for coal leasing but the State determines that the area is suitable for coal leasing, that under the suitability Criteria Number 15(43 CFR Section 3461.5(o)(1)) the BLM is required to find the area suitable for leasing?

Answer: Unsuitability Criterion 15 does not require consensus between a State and the BLM as to whether an area is unsuitable. Rather, Criterion 15 requires consultation with the State. As the preamble to the rule establishing Criterion 15 explained in 1979, Criterion 15 “does not allow any state the determinative say in how Federal lands will be used.” (44 Fed. Reg. 42584, 42604). The 1979 preamble goes on to explain that giving such control over “unsuitability assessments on Federal lands ...might be in derogation of section 523 of the Surface Mining Act.” (44 Fed. Reg. 42604). Thus, a lack of agreement between a State and the BLM does not mean an area is by default suitable.

Stewart Q2: Also, if the BLM and the State find the area unsuitable for coal leasing pursuant to Criteria Number 15, is there a path forward for coal leasing through exceptions gained through mitigation and other mine design requirements?

Answer: Yes, even if an area is determined to be unsuitable under Criteria 15, leasing may still occur, “if, after consultation with the state, the surface management agency determines that all or certain stipulated methods of coal mining will not have a significant long term impact on the species being protected.” 43 C.F.R. 3461.5(o)(1). The reference to “methods [of coal] mining” in the regulations includes consideration of mitigation measures and/or other design features that might be identified as part of the BLM’s review process to address impacts associated with a particular project.

Questions from Mr. Amodei**Greater Sage-Grouse**

Last year, the Secretary of the Interior announced Secretarial Order 3336 to protect the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem in the Great Basin area from wildland fire and invasive species. The Department also plans to implement a National Seed Strategy and Implementation Plan to address invasive species, altered wildfire regimes, habitat fragmentation, and ecological restoration of the West. Additionally, the Department of Agriculture recently announced a commitment to provide an additional \$207 million to greater sage-grouse conservation bringing their total commitment under the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sage Grouse Initiative to \$763 million over the past few years.

Amodei Q1: Does the BLM consider these combined efforts to be an unprecedented commitment by the Department of the Interior towards protecting and conserving the Sage-hen and its sagebrush-steppe ecosystem?

Answer: The BLM considers the range-wide planning effort and the subsequent implementation of the resulting land use plans for the conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse and the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem to be unprecedented in scope, as they span much of the West and involve many partners. The requested funding increase will allow the BLM to continue to involve communities and State and Federal partners in coordinating regional conservation and mitigation, sage-grouse habitat restoration, and monitoring and assessments of conditions in priority areas.

The FY2016 BLM budget requests \$60 million – a \$45 million increase from 2015 – for greater sage-grouse conservation and sagebrush-steppe restoration.

Amodei Q2: What percentage of that \$60 million would be used for on-the-ground work in BLM field offices?

Answer: The allocation of funds awaits completion of the land use planning process later this summer. However, the BLM anticipates a large portion of the requested funding will be directed towards projects that: (1) protect sagebrush habitat from wildfire by creating fuel breaks and reducing fuel loads; (2) remove invasive species and seed with desirable species; and (3) restore burned areas to healthy rangelands. The success of these efforts depends on good monitoring, and funds will also be devoted to those efforts.

Included in Secretarial Order 3336, the Task Force is required to “provide the Secretary two reports that outline actions that can be accomplished prior to the onset of the 2015 wildfire season, and actions that will require a longer period for implementation.” Such actions include “establishing protocols for monitoring the effectiveness of fuels management, post-fire, and long-term restoration treatments and a strategy for adaptive management to modify management practices or improve land treatments when necessary.”

Amodei Q3: Is the BLM concerned that the Fish and Wildlife Service might issue a listing determination for the Sage hen before monitoring of the effectiveness of the fuels management and habitat restoration policies outlined in the Secretarial Order are conducted?

Answer: The revised and amended land use plans incorporate conservation measures in a manner that provides certainty to the Service the activities will take place. The BLM worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and other agencies to prepare the reports required by the Secretarial Order and also in developing the Fire and Invasives Assessments. The Secretarial Order reports, the Fire and Invasives Assessments, and the administrative draft revised and amended land use plans will all be available to the FWS for their consideration during their status review under the ESA as part of its forthcoming listing decision.

Amodei Q4: Would the BLM prefer more time to monitor the results and effectiveness of these unprecedented rangeland management efforts and policies before issuing a listing determination?

Answer: The BLM is making commitments to sage-grouse and sagebrush-steppe conservation in the new land use plan revisions and amendments that will begin to be implemented when the Records of Decisions are signed later this summer. As explained above, these land use plans incorporate conservation measures designed to provide the FWS with regulatory mechanisms that address threats to the species such that listing under the ESA is not necessary. The listing determination is in the purview of the FWS.

Amodei Q5: Is the BLM concerned that if the Sage hen is listed, voluntary conservation efforts and financial commitments from state and private land owners to protect the species will decline?

Answer: The BLM will continue to work with willing landowners and agencies to implement sage-grouse habitat conservation. The requested funds will help the BLM implement the commitments made to the States and other partners through the collaborative planning effort. The funding will allow the BLM and its many partners to take meaningful steps forward on restoring rangelands, minimizing the threat of wildfire, controlling invasive plants, and improving riparian areas. Together the BLM and its partners can maintain or improve the sagebrush habitat which forms the foundation for so many components of the traditional western lifestyle and avert the need to list the species under the ESA. The BLM plans to complete amendments to 68 of its land use plans to conserve and protect greater sage-grouse later this summer.

The BLM has said it plans to complete amendments to 68 of its land use plans to conserve and protect greater sage-grouse by the end of September 2015

Amodei Q6: Is the BLM basing resource management plan amendments to protect sage-hen on the assumption that it will be listed?

Answer: The BLM is addressing the threats to the Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat in the revised and amended land use plans so that listing the species under the ESA is unnecessary.

Sagebrush habitats support a variety of recreational opportunities and the economic vitality of the West, as well as over 350 sagebrush obligate species. The conservation measures in the BLM resource management plans are intended to reduce impacts to sage-grouse populations and the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem.

Amodei Q7: To what extent do BLM’s sage-hen land use plan amendments make a connection between decisions that restrict multiple uses—like livestock grazing and mining—and improved sage-hen habitat?

Answer: The BLM’s plans will seek to limit development in important sage-grouse habitat, while encouraging development in areas where there is less or no conflict with Greater Sage-Grouse conservation. The plans recognize – as does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – that well-managed grazing practices can be compatible with long-term sage-grouse conservation. The plans put no lands off limits to grazing, nor do they require a one-size-fits-all approach to grazing allotments. The BLM relies on the best available information to manage public lands for multiple use and sustained yield.

Grazing & Wild Horses

Included in the Department of the Interior’s FY2016 budget request is a new grazing administration fee program that would potentially bring in \$16.5 million in FY216, \$8 million of which would be spent monitoring grazing allotments in sage-grouse habitat. The increase in monitoring is expected to occur in allotments already being monitored, which means there would be an increased number of compliance visits to each allotment.

Amodei Q8: What percentage of sage hen habitat fragmentation in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem is cattle grazing responsible for?

Answer: Improper livestock grazing can contribute to invasive species, habitat degradation and fragmentation of sagebrush-steppe habitat. Because habitat degradation and fragmentation can occur at different scales and scopes, the BLM cannot provide an exact percentage of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat fragmentation caused by improper livestock grazing. The BLM monitors and addresses improper livestock grazing on an allotment by allotment basis.

Amodei Q9: How many acres in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem do wild horses and burros occupy?

Answer: According to a 2013 USGS report entitled “Summary of Science, Activities, Programs, and Policies That Influence the Rangeland Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse,” the BLM manages wild horses and burros on approximately 14.6 million acres of sage-grouse habitat predominantly in Nevada, southwest Wyoming and southeast Oregon.

Amodei Q10: What percentage of sage hen habitat fragmentation in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem are wild horses and burros responsible for?

Answer: According to a 2013 USGS report entitled “Summary of Science, Activities, Programs, and Policies That Influence the Rangeland Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse,,” overpopulation of wild horses and burros can contribute to degradation and fragmentation of sagebrush-steppe habitat, though the precise nature and scale of these impacts is unclear. Monitoring data is being collected to better understand this relationship.

Questions from Ms. McCollum**National Conservation Lands**

The budget request includes an increase of \$11 million to protect and maintain National Conservation Lands.

McCollum Q1: What can we expect to see if we provide this increase?

Answer: While National Conservation Lands represent a small portion of the lands managed by BLM, one-quarter of all visitors to BLM lands make these special areas their destination of choice. This investment will help to ensure these untamed places remain a legacy for all future generations. The additional investment will provide essential support and aid the Bureau in addressing high-priority needs to ensure quality recreation and visitor services. The requested funding increase will support critical resource protection and maintenance work. Efforts to be undertaken include eradicating invasive plants; protecting equipment investments from weather; conducting inventories of natural and cultural resources; and implementing resource, science and travel management plans. The BLM will also address additional maintenance needs, including maintenance for signage and facilities.

McCollum Q2: What difference will this investment make?

Answer: Though visitation to BLM lands has grown, financial investment in the Recreation and Visitor Services program has not kept pace with this growth. A strong commitment to conservation also means proactive management of cultural and paleontological resources. This increase will help bolster BLM's capacity to preserve and protect these vast heritage resources by allowing the BLM to fill positions such as NCA managers, recreation managers, and field staff, as well as provide additional resources for highly visited and sensitive areas. Funding to the visitor centers will accommodate public demand for increased hours of operation and program offerings.

Youth Programs

To carry on our commitment to natural landscapes, it is imperative to engage youth with the outdoors.

BLM's youth funding was zeroed out in 2015. The budget proposes a \$5.0 million request in 2016 that will restore BLM to its 2014 level.

McCollum Q3: Can you tell us what this \$5 million will be used for?

Answer: The 2016 budget request includes an increase of \$5.0 million over the 2015 enacted level, for a total of \$6.0 million, which will be used to connect young people with the outdoors by providing them with opportunities to play, learn, serve, and work on public lands. Funding will also support national-level partnerships that promote expanded access to public lands, stewardship of cultural and natural resources, and outdoor ethics. The requested increase is split

between two subactivities, with \$2.5 million in the Recreation Resources Management subactivity, and \$2.5 million in the Soil, Water & Air Management subactivity. Funds in both subactivities will support the following field-level partnership programs:

- **Take It Outside**, a program to engage youth from all backgrounds in recreational activities, informal learning experiences, and stewardship projects. The BLM estimates that more than 75,000 kids will participate in 2016. In 2016, the BLM is joining **Every Kid in a Park**, a new Administration initiative that will provide expanded access to public lands for 4th graders and their families. Field sites will be better able to serve visitors with programs and materials, including BLM Junior Explorer booklets.
- **Hands on the Land**, a growing network of outdoor classrooms that provides K-12 students with hands-on field-based learning, developed in partnership with local schools to meet local education standards. The BLM has more than 70 Hands on the Land sites. The BLM estimates that in 2016 the program will host over 1,300 days of outdoor classroom activities for nearly 61,000 students, teachers and parents. The program also creates connections with communities that leverage significant volunteer and school staff hours and in cash and in-kind contributions.
- **DOI/VISTA Interns**, the BLM and partner organizations address poverty through education and stewardship projects that build job skills.
- **Project-based Work and Internships** where Youth Corps organizations, such as the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, help the BLM accomplish mission-critical work and provide job skills and training to young people, many from communities hard hit by unemployment.

McCollum Q4: How does BLM use youth to help its mission?

Answer: Engaging youth in volunteer service and in project-based work and internships provides the BLM with a cost-effective way to accomplish its mission of sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

The BLM works with over 150 partners to engage youth corps crews, interns, and volunteers to perform the following functions:

- Building and maintaining trails and other recreational facilities that enable increasing numbers of visitors to enjoy public lands, and ensure public health and safety
- Engaging in habitat restoration projects, from invasive species removal to native seed collection and planting
- Assessing and addressing impacts of wildland fire
- Monitoring water quality and riparian health
- Monitoring the impacts of energy production on wildlife and public land health.

In addition to addressing current BLM resource management goals, these youth service and work programs are critical to workforce planning efforts. Through a continuum of youth programs

from early childhood to early career, the BLM is creating a diverse and skilled workforce for the 21st century, ensuring the long-term health, diversity, and productivity of public lands.

WITNESSES

	Page
Ashe, Dan	77
Dixon, Tony	1
Jarvis, Jonathan	159
Kornze, N. G	207
Nolin, Chris	77
Sheaffer, Bruce	159
Tidwell, Tom	1

INDEX

U.S. Forest Service 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing March 3, 2015, Rayburn B-308

	Page
Aviation Assets.....	28, 69
Biography—Antoine “Tony” Dixon	15
Biography—Chief Tom Tidwell	14
Chief Tidwell’s Career	19
Collaborative Forest Landscapes	74
Data Center Consolidations	65
Designation by Prescription	75
Fire and Aviation Management	69
Fire Fighting Technology: PCADS	30
Fire Transfer: Supplemental Funding	16
FY 2016 Forest Service Budget Proposal	3
Forest Legacy Program	25
Forest Plan Revision: Grazing Planning in Utah	19
Hazardous Fuels Management	27
Honduras	73
Illegal Marijuana Cultivation on National Forests	31
Integrated Resource Restoration	75
International Forestry.....	17, 64, 73
Landscape Scale Restoration Proposals	29
Legislative Proposals: SRS, LWCF, PILT	21
Mining Proposals: Administration	32
Monongahela National Forest	71
Northern Long Eared Bat	72
Opening Remarks of Chairman Calvert	1
Opening Remarks of Chief Tidwell	3
Opening Remarks of Ms. McCollum	2
Organizational Chart	34
Questions for the Record from Chairman Calvert	34
Questions for the Record from Mr. Amodei	69
Questions for the Record from Mr. Jenkins	71
Questions for the Record from Mr. Kilmer	74
Questions for the Record from Ms. Pingree	73
Questions for the Record from Mr. Simpson	66
Recreation Resources	75
Restoration: Collaborative Efforts	21
Restoration: Healthy, Resilient Forests	19
Secure Rural Schools: Increasing Timber Revenue	20
Statement of Chief Tidwell	6
Terrestrial Condition Assessment	61
Trails Funding	68

	Page
Treasure Lake Job Corps Center	23
Urban and Community Forestry	29
Urban Field Stations and Urban Forests	26
Wild Horse and Burro Program	64
Wildland Fire Suppression Cap Proposal	17, 66
Wood Innovation Technology	22

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing
March 17, 2015, Rayburn B-308**

Aquatic Drug Approval Program Cuts	152
Asian Carp	104
Biography—Budget Officer Chris Nolin	90
Biography—Director Dan Ashe	88
Challenge Cost Share	130
Civilian Conservation Corps	106
Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs)	119
Consultation and Permitting	115
Duck Stamp	136
Endangered Species	95, 98
Environmental Contaminants	137
ESA: Budget Consolidation	113
ESA: Delisting/Downlisting/Uplisting Backlog	111
ESA: Northern Long-Eared Bat.....	139, 150
ESA: Sage-Grouse.....	100, 114, 142, 144, 148
ESA: State and Tribal Wildlife Grants	114
ESA: Status Reviews	112
Gray Wolves.....	91, 154
Grazing	147
Invasive Species State Plans	103
Land Acquisition and County Payments	127
Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)	131
Law Enforcement	107, 136
Maintenance Backlog	120
Mass Marking	103
Monarch Butterfly	91
National Fish Hatchery System	122, 139, 154
National Ocean Policy	129
National Wildlife Refuge System	97
Northern Long-Eared Bat.....	139, 150
Opening Remarks of Chairman Calvert	77
Opening Remarks of Director Ashe	79
Opening Remarks of Ms. Pingree	78
Partners for Fish and Wildlife and the Budget Restructure	96
Questions for the Record from Chairman Calvert	111
Questions for the Record from Chairman Rogers	139
Questions for the Record from Mr. Amodei	144
Questions for the Record from Mr. Israel	157
Questions for the Record from Mr. Kilmer	154
Questions for the Record from Mr. Simpson	142
Questions for the Record from Ms. Pingree	150
Rangeland Management	147
Refuge Cleanup	138
Refuge Cost Recovery	134
Reprogramming Guidelines	129

	Page
Sage-Grouse	100, 114, 142, 144, 148
Sage-Steppe Habitat	100
Sea Urchins and Cucumbers	92
Secretary Salazar's Commitment to Work with the States	148
Service Science	109
Statement of Director Ashe	82
Wild Horses	147
Wildlife Trafficking.....	83, 105, 123, 157

National Park Service 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing
March 17, 2015, Rayburn B-308

American Made Souvenirs	181
Antiquities Act	191
Biography—Comptroller Bruce Sheaffer	172
Biography—Director Jonathan Jarvis	170
Bottled Water	183, 203
Centennial Challenge	190
Chickasaw National Recreation Area	199
Chisholm and Great Western National Historic Trail	198
Civil War Trust	180
Concession Franchise Fees	182
Deferred Maintenance	173, 188
Endowment.....	178, 179
Establish New Units	174
Everglades Restoration	196
Fee Increase.....	179, 194
Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA)	193
Glenn Canyon National Recreation Area	201
Land and Water Conservation Fund	176
Lewis and Clark Trail Study.....	179, 190
Lower Elwha Dam Removal	205
Mandated Minimum Wage	202
National Mall.....	194, 196
National Monument Designations	191
National Park Foundation	175
National Park Service Budget Priorities	173
National Park Service Website	175
Olympic National Park—Elwha Dam.....	177, 205
Opening Remarks of Chairman Calvert	159
Opening Remarks of Director Jarvis	162
Opening Remarks of Ms. McCollum	160
Questions for the Record from Chairman Calvert	188
Questions for the Record from Mr. Amodei	203
Questions for the Record from Mr. Cole	198
Questions for the Record from Mr. Kilmer	205
Questions for the Record from Mr. Stewart	201
Raising NPS Recreation Fees	194
Reimbursing States for Government Shutdown Costs	195
September 11 Memorial	174
Smithsonian Folklife Festival	196
State Historic Preservation Offices	177
Statement of Director Jarvis	164
Tamiami Trail Bridging Project	196
Transportation Reauthorization	177

	Page
Tribal Historic Preservation Offices	205
United States Park Police	174
White House Perimeter	185

**Bureau of Land Management 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing
March 19, 2015, Rayburn B-308**

Alton Coal Mine	220, 245
Biography—Director Neil Kornze	217
BLM Foundation	221
Cost of Litigation	243
Data Center Consolidation	244
Energy	236
Fire Retardant	244
Grazing	248
Grazing Permit Backlog	219
Grazing Permit Fee	218
Grazing Permit Renewals	227
Human Capital	243
Hydraulic Fracturing	229
Mineral Lease Renewal Voyageurs National Park.....	218, 224
National Conservation Lands	250
Native Plants	237
Oil and Gas Inspection Fee	228, 229
Opening Remarks of Chairman Calvert	207
Opening Remarks of Director Kornze	210
Opening Remarks of Ms. McCollum	208
Questions for the Record from Chairman Calvert	231
Questions for the Record from Mr. Amodei	246
Questions for the Record from Mr. Stewart	245
Questions for the Record from Ms. McCollum	250
Sage-Grouse.....	222, 231, 246
Statement of Director Kornze	212
Steens Mountain CMPA Fence	222
Threatened and Endangered Species	234
Threats to BLM Employees	224
Voyageurs National Park	218, 224
Wild Horses and Burros	225, 241, 248
Youth Programs	250